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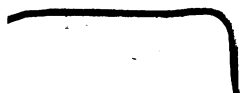


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The One Who Looked On



F. F. Montresor

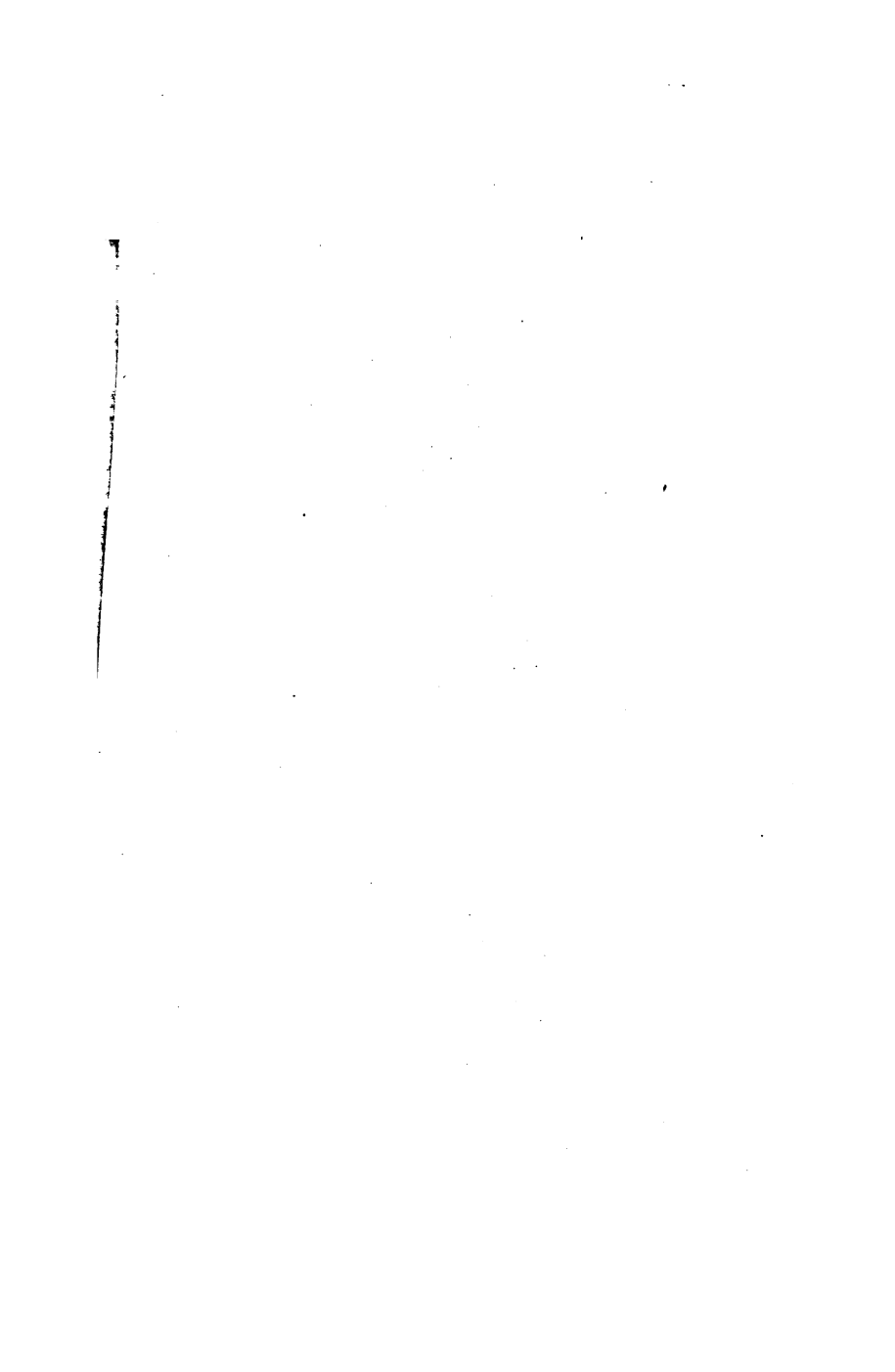


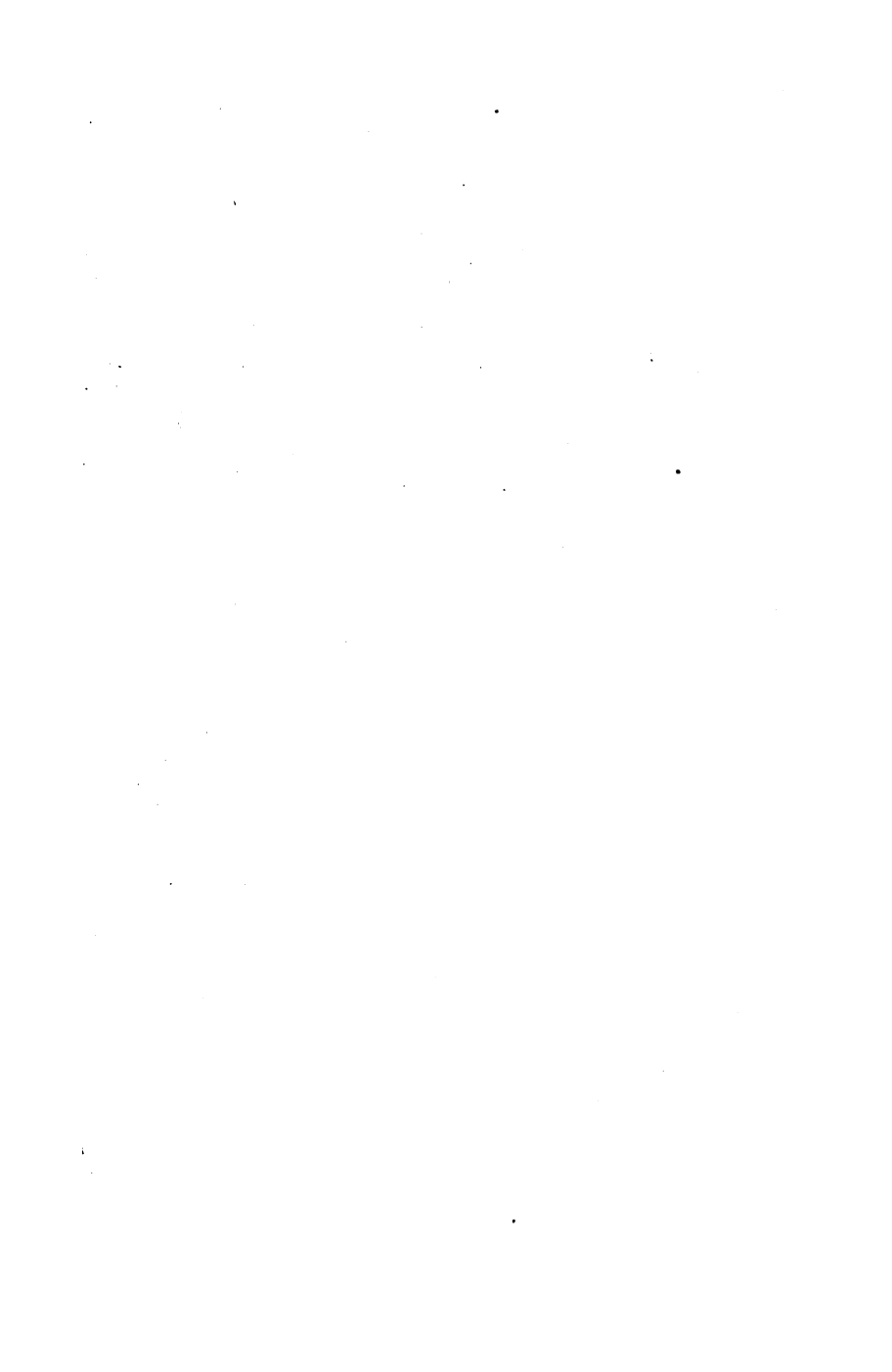
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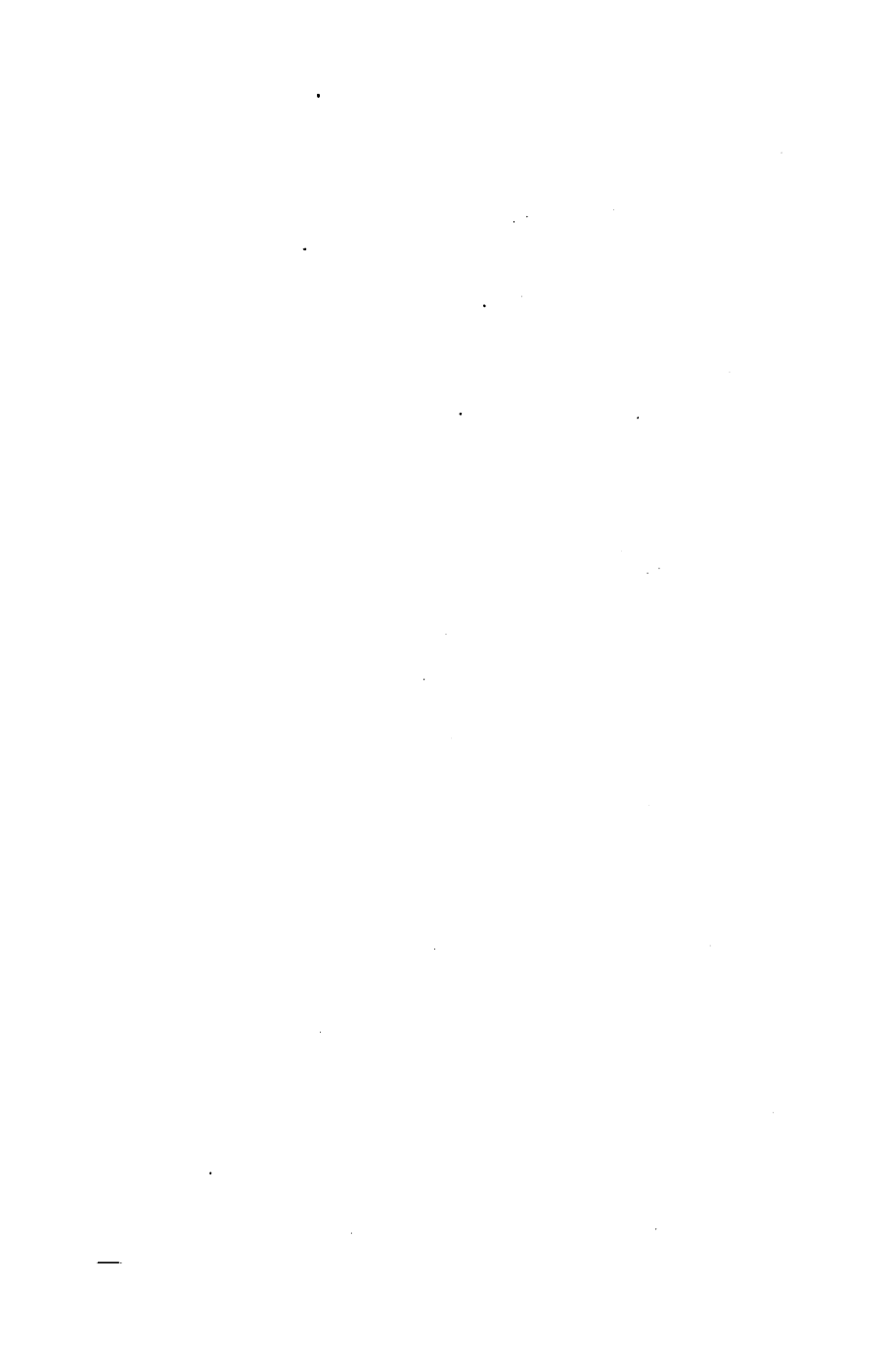
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The One who Looked On

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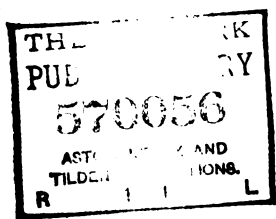
Author of Into the Highways and Hedges



New York
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1898

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TO
L. DE V. COLVIN.



THE ONE WHO LOOKED ON.

“You think God’s balance tilts the loss with gain?
Nay, friend—I know it.”

THIS story, if it can be called a story, was not told connectedly as it is written down in these pages, but in fragments and at various times.

Susie, from whom I heard it, was no longer young when I first knew her. She was the most motherly woman that it has ever been my luck to meet.

That she never married; that she had no babies of her own, was, I think, fortunate for the many forlorn children, not her own, who had good cause to love her.

Susie was Irish, and, when she talked, her words came out as if she relished the taste of them. She was not critical, but she had a trick of observation, and her reminiscences always interested me.

To Susie the whole gist and point of the story lay in the characters of Sir Charles Bargreave and Pauline. To me the one who looked on was the most interesting.

I have a water-colour sketch of Susie that I once rescued from the dust-bin, for she was always careless about her possessions.

In the sketch she is depicted as a girl of eighteen, with a very round face; with coils of glossy red hair, and with bewitchingly soft, grey-blue eyes. She has a fresh, healthy colour, and a very merry expression. She wears a white muslin "garibaldi," and she has a bit of needlework in her hand.

"That sketch was done when I was quite a girl, before I went to Eaton Square," Susie remarked, when I showed it to her.

She did not explain why she had left her girlhood behind her in London—but I think I guessed that.

"How well I remember," said Susie, "the day I first saw Sir Charles Bargreave! It seemed to me that he brought all our troubles

with him packed in his neat new portmanteau. Nothing else was either new or neat at dear Ballymohr. Ballymohr was all the home I had; for my father and mother died before I was three years old. I never felt 'orphaned,' and no child ever had a happier childhood. Aunt Grace and Uncle Dennis showered plentiful love on me, and Charlie and Molly were like my own little brother and sister to me. Aunt Grace was never anything but an invalid after Molly's birth, and I got into the way of looking after the children. Aunt Grace always called me her 'eldest daughter,' and when she was dying she bid me take care of 'Uncle Dennis and the little ones.' There never was a kinder or more generous gentleman than my uncle, but he hadn't the ghost of an idea of taking care of himself.

"I remember that I always liked to hear him say that he 'couldn't possibly get on without Susie,' and I was proud of the fact that he and Charlie and Molly would all be quite aggrieved and doleful if I were even a day away from them.

"Uncle Dennis petted me, and I petted the children, and we all tumbled along very happily till Sir Charles came.

"Before Aunt Grace died I used to go to the great Ballymohr Convent for lessons; but, after her death, I had so much to do at home that I could not waste the time on books.

"My hands were pretty full, and they were rather young hands to hold the reins of a household; but, luckily, we all took things easily. Uncle Dennis had the best of even tempers, and he never minded in the least when the joint wouldn't last, and when, in consequence, we had to have a 'scramble' dinner of eggs and bacon.

"When we had company I always helped old Biddy to cook the dinner. I was a fair cook, and Biddy was very fond of me, though I could not always manage to keep her from 'the drink.' There was very little money, and plenty of love at Ballymohr. When I went to London I lived in a house where it was just the other way, but *our* way was the happier.

"Sir Charles Bargreave was an old college

friend of my uncle, and Uncle Dennis was very proud of him at the time that Sir Charles was counsel for the defence in the celebrated trial of Laidslow *versus* Crawford. Uncle Dennis used to insist on reading aloud extracts from the *Times*' report while we were at breakfast.

"'Listen to this, Sue! Charles had him there! Ah ha! that fellow laughed the wrong side of his mouth, eh? when Charles said that. Now just attend to this.'

"But Sir Charles always seemed to me to be very sharp and disagreeable to the poor witnesses; I felt no admiration for him, and I bore him a grudge, for Uncle Dennis would always let the coffee get quite cold on the days when his clever friend figured in the paper.

"I never read the *Times* myself. It was all very well for men to quarrel over politics, but I had so many more important matters to attend to. I remember that I was especially busy on the day Sir Charles arrived.

"I had been hard at work all the afternoon, cutting up a velveteen dress of my own in order to make a suit for Charlie out of it.

Then I went to the kitchen to whip a strawberry cream, and to put out the best glass dishes for our guest; and that being done, I ran up to change my dress just when the clock struck seven. We were supposed to dine at seven, but I was sure O'Flanagan would not ring the bell before I was ready. He would know that I had to put on my best gown!

"I felt pleased with the white muslin dress that I myself had made, and that was straight out of the wash-tub and beautifully starched and clean. Molly and Charlie and Biddy all helped me to dress.

"Biddy ought not to have left the soup, but it was a peculiarity of the Ballymohr household that its members were always delighted to leave their own work and to turn willing hands to someone else's.

"Biddy said all sorts of pretty things to me while I was dressing, and, when she fastened the pearls, that Aunt Grace had left me, round my neck, she cried:

"'Faith! they look black by the side o' ye! Ye've the skin like new milk, me darlint,

and it will do the poor English gentleman's eyes good to see it afther the dirty Londoners he has been livin' among !'

"But I doubt whether the English gentleman *was* much impressed. He was standing by the mantlepiece, talking to my uncle, and glancing at the clock though I was only half an hour after time.

"'This is my old housekeeper, who keeps us in fine order !' said Uncle Dennis ; and then O'Flanagan, who had only been waiting for me, announced dinner.

"I sat at one side of the table, for I never could bear to sit in Aunt Grace's place, and sir Charles sat opposite to me, but addressed his conversation to my uncle.

"He talked well, and with a good deal of dry humour. Some of his remarks made me laugh even when I did not want to. He never smiled at his own wit, but Uncle Dennis leaned back in his chair and shouted :

"'Good for you, my boy !' whenever his friend said any thing clever.

"For my part, I thought that Sir Charles

was uncomfortably keen. He was a new type to me, and I was not sure that I liked him. He spoke with a different accent and in quite a different style from any of the squires about Ballymohr, and he made me feel 'countrified' and shy. I said to myself that it was he who ought to have been bashful, seeing that he was a stranger, and that I was at home; but the reflection did not give me much assurance.

"Sir Charles was ten years my uncle's junior; he must have been about six-and-thirty when I first met him. I thought then that six-and-thirty was quite elderly.

"He was clean-shaven, and his lips were very straight, except for a curious little curve at the corner that gave them a satirical expression. His features were clear cut, and he had steel-grey eyes. He was not big like my dear uncle, who was a giant in stature, and one of the handsomest men I have seen; but he was well made and upright, and his hands were like a doctor's hands, very strong, and very sensitive.

"He carved beautifully. It is a trifle to

have remembered, but Uncle Dennis always slashed extravagantly, and I noticed the difference. Sir Charles and my uncle were great contrasts; perhaps that was why they were such friends.

"Charlie and Molly came in to dessert. I liked Sir Charles less then, for he hardly noticed them at all, though they were really remarkable children. Everyone else always complimented me on their looks; so it was no partiality on my part that made me think them lovely.

"Charlie was a delicate boy with fairish hair and a dear little nose, 'tip-tilted,' and a pale complexion—a very uncommon-looking child, and my favourite.

"Molly was a jolly, little, fat roundabout, with curly brown locks and round, brown eyes and red cheeks.

"Uncle Dennis pulled Charlie round to his right side, next Sir Charles.

"'Here's your godfather, my boy,' he said. 'Suppose you shake hands with him.'

"Charlie, who was very deliberate, and

who, unlike his father, never did anything in a hurry, looked Sir Charles over from top to toe before he answered. Then he said clearly and slowly in his high treble voice :

“‘No, thank you, dad ; I’d rather not.’

“I always had a respect for Charlie ; that child’s moral courage was remarkable ! but, perhaps, it was *rather* rude of him.

“Sir Charles laughed. ‘There’s nothing like knowing your own mind,’ he said. ‘Well, Farrant, about that tenant you were speaking of. What did Father O’Flaherty say then?’ And he went on talking over Charlie’s head. He wasn’t fond of children ; anyone could see that.

“Charlie was so sensitive I was afraid he felt snubbed. It is such a mistake to snub a boy. He came round to my side of the table and whispered :

“‘I don’t like that man. What does he come for, Susie?’

“Uncle Dennis overheard, and looked annoyed.

“‘I am afraid Susie’s too kind to you, my

son,' he said—as if one could be too kind to a motherless child—and then Molly, who had been quite quiet before, suddenly pulled the table-cloth and upset the apples and Sir Charles' wine, which went all over his shirt front.

"Charlie was delighted, and clapped his hands. It was really very tiresome of Molly. I picked her up and carried her off at once, though I don't think she meant any harm, poor little mite, and she was dreadfully aggrieved.

"‘I was only sittin' in my little 'ouse,' she said. ‘An' I pulled down the white blind, 'cause I was 'tending it was night; I wasn't naughty.’

"‘Oh dear, uncle's visitor will think you very badly brought up children!’ I cried; but Molly put her plump arms round my neck and cuddled while I was pulling off her socks, and Charlie said:

"‘Never you mind him, Sue, he is only a nasty Englishman!’ at which we all cheered up.

“Nevertheless, I was ashamed that our guest should have had such an uncomfortable dinner, and, when I did screw up courage to go down again, I found Uncle Dennis looking as if he too were horribly crest-fallen. When I opened the door I heard him saying ruefully :

“‘ Oh, I quite believe you that I’m in the d— of a mess! but, after all, if the money’s gone, there’s small comfort in puzzling about how it went, eh? We’ve bother enough without that. Oh,’ in a tone of relief, ‘ it’s Susie! Did you whip them all round and put them to bed, my dear? Here’s Sir Charles thinking that a little order is badly needed in this establishment,’ which was very impertinent of Sir Charles.

“He went away the next day, and Charlie and Molly and I were very glad to see the last of him. He surprised me by insisting on giving me his address before he left.

“‘ You never can tell; you might possibly want it,’ he said, ‘ if—if anything were to happen.’

"We were standing in the hall to speed his departure, and I was trying to suppress Charlie's manifestations of delight; but I looked up in astonishment when he held out a slip of paper with his name and address written very clearly on it. Why should I want it?

"‘It won't bite you,’ he said, which irritated me. He talked to me as if I were Molly's age.

"I didn't take the bit of paper; I stood staring at him stupidly, because, when our eyes met, I saw something in his that puzzled me. He looked *sorry* for me. It was as if I had seen a banshee! It gave me a presentiment, but I recovered myself the next moment.

"‘Uncle Dennis knows where you live; and I wouldn't be likely to want this,’ I said.

"‘But please keep it,’ said Sir Charles. ‘Good-bye, name-sake.’ He didn't offer to shake hands with Charlie this time. ‘Good-bye, Miss Susie.’ And then he took the reins out of my uncle's hands, and they drove away

in the dog-cart. Uncle Dennis had given up driving.

"I remember thinking while I watched the dog-cart bowl down the drive, that Uncle Dennis had given up a great many things lately; but I put the thought away, for it made me feel uneasy; besides, Charlie was trying to stand on his head on the mat, and Molly was pulling the gathers out of my dress.

"It was late autumn when Sir Charles paid us his first visit. It was in the rise of the next year that I saw him again. Ballymohr looked lovely that spring. Some people called it 'neglected,' but I loved it the more for its wildness. Everything, even the weeds, grew luxuriantly in that hospitable old place. The fruit trees were not planted apart in a fruit garden, but were dotted about among the flowers. The pear blossom on the lawn was like summer snow against the sweet lilac; and the grass under the crab tree was starred with crocuses and with merry daffodils, with their spear-like leaves, that pushed up energetically,

and their golden heads, that nodded in the breeze.

“Our honey was nicer than any other honey, and our bees knew Uncle Dennis, and would settle on him like a black cloud whenever he stood by the hive, with never a sting among them for him. They filled the dear old garden with their humming; a contented murmur to be heard below the shrill chirrup of the new-fledged birds. I used to shut my eyes in London, and try to fancy that I *heard* that garden there!

“When the trouble came the bees swarmed and deserted us. Bees know quite well when the head of the house is dead.

“Charlie and Molly and I were trying to drive the pigs off the lawn one sunny morning, and how they got out was always a mystery, when the bad news came.

“I was laughing so at the old sow, who was plunging among the flower-beds, that I could not stop myself at first, even at sight of Jim’s scared face.

“‘Miss Susie, dear!’ he said; ‘oh, Miss

Susie—the master—’ and could get no further, but stood choking and squeezing his hands together; he that was usually so full of words; and then, all of a sudden, my heart gave a jump, and my laughing was driven back so violently that I felt quite giddy for a moment.

“‘Where is he? What has happened?’ I cried.

“‘They are carrying him in,’ said Jim. ‘But don’t you go, Missie! Sure! your heart’ll be broke!’

“But I went.

“I ran at full speed across the grass and along the gravel path, and met the men advancing up the drive, carrying something on a gate. When they saw me they set their burden down. It lay quite still, with the hands hanging straight down, and the head a little to one side, stiller than ever Uncle Dennis had been in all his life.

“‘We picked him up in the road, lying on his face, down by O’Shanghnessy’s cabin,’ they told me. His body was cold when they

found it. It must have been there for some hours.

"They had carried him into the cabin and tried to bring back warmth, and O'Shanghnessy was riding for the doctor 'as if the devil was after him.' My uncle must have fallen without a cry or groan, for not a soul in the cabin had known that he lay just outside the door.

"Then they took their burden into the house, through the hall, into what we called the study, though it was little studying anyone ever did there.

"Charlie had run after me, and now clung tight to me, with both arms round my waist; but Molly was still toddling after the pigs on the lawn, and I could hear her shrill, little voice through the open window.


"Old Biddy tried to pour brandy between the cold lips; it trickled out on to the pillow, and I stopped her. The men edged away, with pitying looks at Charlie, and murmurs about seeing whether the doctor was in sight; but it wasn't the doctor that would recall the

soul of Uncle Dennis to his body, and even I knew that!

“It was on a Monday that my uncle’s body was brought home to us, and his funeral was on the Saturday. All the week the house was never empty. The people streamed in to look at him, while he lay with the tall candles burning at each side, and with his hands crossed upon his breast.

“I would not let Biddy take the children to the library. I wanted them to remember their father as he was in life; not to connect him with that still, quiet figure that was not dear Uncle Dennis at all!

“Biddy was aggrieved at that, and I had to keep Charlie very close to me. Even as it was he heard far too many ghastly details about ‘corpses’ and ‘ghosts’ and ‘warnings’ and ‘laying-outs’; and I would sit by him till he fell asleep, after I discovered that his nights were haunted by a horrible tale about a man who was buried alive and was found years afterwards ‘half out of his coffin.’



"Oh, my dear, it was a terrible time. The house was just full of wailing, crying, chattering people all the day long; and I couldn't send them away, I, who wasn't mistress at all, nor daughter of the house, but yet had lost a father!

"Then, in the midst of all my sorrow for the dead, sprang up a fear I couldn't bear to look at, but which lingered in a corner of my mind. 'Suppose they should part me from the children?'

"Oh, how I wished I were Charlie and Molly's real sister! It shows how good my uncle was to me that, till the day he died, I hadn't felt I wasn't!

"It was Father O'Flaherty who made me send for Sir Charles Bargreave, who was left my uncle's executor, and, to my horror, guardian of poor little Mollie and Charlie.

"Father O'Flaherty didn't approve that last arrangement a bit more than I did.

"Uncle Dennis was a Protestant, but Aunt Grace had belonged to the true Church, and the children had always gone to mass, because

the English service wasn't held nearer than eight miles off.

"Father O'Flaherty told me that Sir Charles was an atheist. I tried not to listen to anything against him, because he had been my uncle's friend; but I could *quite* believe it!

"He came down the day before the funeral, but I did not see him till we reached the churchyard.

"When we got home, I had to go and lie down, for I turned suddenly faint and dizzy, and could do no more, even though I knew that Molly would be given too much funeral cake and spiced wine.

"It is odd how small everyday affairs get mixed up with the big tragedies; I had longed to be able to mourn Uncle Dennis alone and in peace, till it occurred to me how dreary 'peace' would be if it meant no one to look after.

"Some women don't mind being alone; I think they are of a different sort from me; they are, perhaps, clever, or benevolent, or riders of hobbies.

"I don't know what went on downstairs during the remainder of that day. Biddy forgave me for not having let Charlie sup on horrors, and put me to bed as if I were a little girl, and after a time I sobbed myself to sleep, and never woke till the next day, when Sir Charles sent up a message asking whether he might speak with me in the course of the morning.

"I almost wished that I could go on being ill; but I couldn't. I was a very healthy girl, and my long sleep had set me quite to rights.

"Sir Charles had drawn up the blinds and opened the window, and brought an everyday atmosphere back into the house. The sun was streaming into the dining-room, and he was actually reading the *Times*. Uncle Dennis wouldn't have read his paper so quietly the next morning if it had been his friend he had just seen buried. I hated this Englishman for the minute; it made me feel so sore and indignant to see him there.

"'I am sorry to have disturbed you,' he began, getting up and offering me a chair;

‘but it’s always as well to come to an understanding at once. I wish you had been able to be present yesterday, when your uncle’s will was read. It concerns you in part, as, of course, you must have expected.’

“I said I hadn’t thought about it; it was too soon surely to discuss that kind of thing.

“Sir Charles said that, unfortunately, ‘that kind of thing’ had to be thought of, and the dryness of his voice checked my inclination to tears.

“English people are always (to me) difficult to understand; but I have learned, since then, that they are apt to put on a ‘dryer’ manner when they are feeling touched. Perhaps Sir Charles was sorrier for us than I guessed.

“He was dreadfully afraid of a scene; I could see that, and he plunged at once into business. He folded his paper into neat squares while he talked, and he spoke rather fast, only glancing at me every now and then to see whether I understood.

“Uncle Dennis had left fearfully big debts,

and hardly any money, and a heavily mortgaged estate. I gathered so much, and Charlie and Molly would have to be educated somehow. Uncle Dennis had, at first, thought that there would be enough money to pay for an establishment in London, where the children could have some lady to take care of them, and to keep house, and where they could yet live within easy reach of their guardian. He had hoped that I would be the lady.

"Dear Uncle Dennis! It was so good of him to have planned that! I was so grateful to him that I felt my eyes fill and my face flush, in spite of Sir Charles.

"Oh, I wish that that could be arranged!" I cried at last.

"So do I?" replied Sir Charles; "for I never contemplated taking two babies to live with me. But, unhappily, by the time we've satisfied the creditors and paid your legacy, there will be very little left. That plan is out of the question."

"I thought that, at anyrate, he might have tried to carry out my uncle's wishes; and I

suppose my thought showed in my face—I never can prevent my face telling tales—for he added a little impatiently :

“‘ I am doing the best I can for my wards ! With careful nursing I hope to clear the estate by the time Charlie comes of age. He can’t afford to spend money now.’

“‘ I don’t want any legacy,’ I said. ‘ I’ve quite enough to live on. Couldn’t I refuse it ?’

“‘ No ; of course not. It would be quite impossible ; out of the question,’ he replied with such decision that I durst say no more.

“ I was quite as ignorant of money matters as was either Charlie or Molly. I wondered whether it was ‘ illegal ’ to refuse to accept what had been ‘ willed.’ I resolved to spend the money upon Charlie, and give it back in that way, if Charlie’s guardian would let me. I wished that there was no guardian in the case. Sir Charles’ voice broke in upon my meditations.

“‘ I am anxious to get back to London as soon as possible, and I—’ he hesitated a mo-

ment—‘I am thinking of taking the children with me. I can’t leave them here, you see. Why, Miss Susie!’ with a sudden change of tone, ‘don’t look like that. I didn’t mean to startle you so; but surely it must have struck you that something must be done; that we cannot go on indefinitely as if nothing had occurred.’

“‘I know,’ I murmured. ‘That is, I was prepared—I mean I was afraid—of course I had expected—I tried not to think about it.’

“Sir Charles got up and walked up and down the room. I knew that I was behaving very childish, and that he was giving me time to recover myself.

“‘Well,’ he said suddenly, ‘no one else will ever be half so fond of those little rascals as you are. Suppose you come too, Miss Susie? My mother will be delighted to see you. I couldn’t possibly look after two babies in the boat. Besides, you can’t stay here by yourself. Come, think how miserable Charlie will be in a strange place without you. Really, do you know, Miss Susie,’ with a little twitch

at the corner of his mouth, 'really, I think that you ought not to leave him to my tender mercies and want of understanding.'

"I had told Sir Charles once that Charlie was never naughty with anyone who 'understood' him.

"'Do you mean it?' I cried. 'Oh, may I come too? Then I needn't leave them immediately!' And so it was settled.

"Afterwards I was a little ashamed of the way I had jumped at his proposal. I've always thought it horribly mean to accept invitations from anyone one doesn't like; but I never could consider two things at once, and I had been so dreadfully afraid of being cut off from the others. I had dreamed of them all night, rowing away in a boat and leaving me all alone struggling in the sea. When one is horribly afraid of drowning one can't stop to debate on whether one likes to be indebted to the person who throws out the plank, at least I can't.

"Sir Charles smiled. I think he was rather amused, and rather surprised at the

promptness with which I had accepted his proposal.

“‘My mother will be charmed to have you,’ he proceeded; ‘but she does not care much about children.’

“‘How *very* odd!’ I cried, rather disconcerted. ‘Is your mother very—very like you?’ I inquired timidly.

“This time he laughed outright, though I couldn’t see the joke.

“‘Not at all! Not the least bit in the world!’ he said. ‘Oh, you’ll get on with my mother, Miss Susie. You need not have any misgivings. You’ll get on beautifully with her. She and I are not in the least alike.’

“Charlie and Molly were not so overjoyed as I had expected them to be when I told them that we were not going to be parted. Neither of them had taken in that there had been any danger of such a catastrophe.

“Molly was nursing her doll on the floor, and Charlie was sitting in the window-sill pulling the nursery clock to pieces, to find out how it worked. I ought to have scolded him,

but hadn't the heart to just then. His legs were crossed under him tailor-fashion, and his curly head was bent intently over the works. He had the bump of inquiry (his guardian said it was destructiveness) very largely developed.

"'Charlie darling,' I said, 'we are all going to London together; your guardian has asked me to come with you, and to stay with Lady Bargreave for a time, till you and Molly are settled down in your new home. Aren't you glad?'

"'I haven't got a guardian,' said Charlie. 'You and Molly may have him if you like, 'cause you are only girls. I don't want to stay with Lady Bargreave; I 'spect she's horrid, and, *of course*, we shall all be together.'

"'There is no "*of course*" about that now,' I said, half laughing and half crying. 'I've been dreadfully afraid that you'd be taken away from me, my dears!'

"I sat down on the floor and hugged Molly, doll and all, while I spoke. Charlie

hardly ever let himself be kissed ; he looked at me severely.

“‘I call that jolly good cheek!’ he said. ‘As if I would be took!’

“‘You wouldn’t have been able to help yourself,’ I replied, rather injudiciously, ‘if Sir Charles had chosen to part us. You really must behave properly to him now, Charlie. Molly will at once if you do.’

“‘Molly will behave nicely to anyone!’ said Charlie viciously. ‘She’s a silly *girl* baby.’

“At which dreadful accusation Molly’s feelings were much hurt, and she dropped her doll and burst into a sudden roar, with both fat fists stuck in her eyes.

“I comforted her, and scolded Charlie, who sat turning up his nose at us both with supreme contempt. Scolding never had a good effect on him, but he was sometimes amenable to reason (being a wonderfully thoughtful child), and oftener to coaxing.

“I began with the first, which was the least trouble, and went on to the second, and ended with the last.

“‘You are very unkind,’ I said. ‘Poor Molly! She never likes being called a girl! The house is going to be let, so you can’t stay here. It will only make us all unhappy if you make a fuss, and it’s bad enough anyhow. I don’t like leaving Ballymohr either, but it’s better than leaving you. You *will* be good, won’t you, Charlie darling?’

“‘I can stay in the kitchen with Biddy,’ answered Charlie. But he spoke rather doubtfully, for he wasn’t fond of Biddy as a rule, though of late they had been drawn together by a mutual rebellion against Sir Charles.

“‘Biddy is going away,’ I said sadly, ‘and so are all the others. There’ll not be one of us left here.’ And Molly put up her soft, baby hand and patted my cheek in recognition that I too wanted comforting.

“Charlie was silent for a minute, evidently turning matters over in his mind. He was only eight, and I was eighteen; but he wasn’t nearly so impulsive as I was. At last, after a sigh, he spoke.

“‘I s’pose I must go!’ Then, after a pause, ‘What *is* a guardian?’

“‘Someone who stands in your father’s place and whom you must obey,’ I said.

“Charlie frowned. ‘I won’t have nobody take dad’s place,’ said he, with a choke in his voice. He had been very fond of his father.

“‘Look here, Sue. If I always do all the things Sir Charles tells me not to do, and never do anything he tells me to do, then he can’t be my guardian, can he? He can only say he is. That will be the best way, I think!’

“‘Oh, Charlie!’ I cried, aghast. But Charlie jumped down from his perch with the air of having solved the problem. ‘Now I’ll play with you, Molly,’ he said. ‘I couldn’t attend before. I’d got to make up my mind.’

“What a plunge it was from the wilds of Ireland to that highly-civilised and very luxurious house in Eaton Square. How shy and miserable we all were by the time we reached England! We arrived at Waterloo at about

five in the afternoon, and a yellow fog was hanging over everything.

"Molly sat on my knee in the cab, with both arms round my neck, and her face hidden on my shoulder. The darkness frightened her, and no wonder. Charlie eyed his guardian solemnly, and said severely, 'Is this where *you* live?'

"I never knew any other child capable of such crushing intonations as was Charlie.

"It seemed an endless drive through the streets to Eaton Square, and I wasn't pleasantly impressed by my first glimpse of London. I thought it was dirty and noisy by the station, and dirtier and dark and dull in the more aristocratic quarter. I still think that the West End is ugly for the most part. But I learned to love Westminster and the city in time, and to feel the fascination of our great river.

"On that day, however, I saw nothing fascinating, and my courage dwindled with every revolution of the wheels. A powdered footman in silk stockings and knee-breeches

opened the door to us when the cab pulled up at last, and I followed him to the drawing-room with a sinking heart.

“The very atmosphere of that room was a sort of revelation to me. The heaped up, delicately tinted and embroidered cushions, the softly shaded silver lamps, the carpet, that felt like moss, the exquisite flowers and pictures were unlike anything that I had ever seen before!

“The state rooms at the castle had never impressed me with such a sense of riches. *They* were more dignified and lofty; but then they were only used for state occasions, and the ornaments were under glass cases there, and were treated with respect. Here, treasures were just scattered about, as if the mistress thought nothing of using her pretty things every day, and small blame to her, seeing that she could never have been meant to handle anything that was ugly.

“Oh, but she was pretty! that dainty little old lady! She came forward to meet us with both her hands stretched out. They were tiny

hands, and her fingers blazed with diamonds. She was dressed like an old picture. Her snow-white hair was rolled over a cushion, and she wore a fine lace scarf on her head like a mantilla. She was a French marquise before the Revolution. I felt as if I ought to curtsy to her.

“‘You poor, poor children, how weary you must all be,’ she said. ‘Tea is all ready for the little ones in the nursery. You’ll be glad, I know. You would like to go up with them, wouldn’t you?’ (this to me). ‘And then you must come down and have your tea with me. Kate! take them upstairs.’ And we were all swept off.

“She hadn’t looked much at the children, or kissed them, as, I feel sure, Aunt Grace kissed me when Uncle Dennis brought me home a fatherless, motherless, little maid of Molly’s age; but, perhaps, in England people never kissed, and certainly Charlie would have resented it if she had kissed him. Kate was a stout, homely-looking girl, whom the children took to at once, and the nursery, when we got

to it, looked cosy and pretty. It was better furnished than were any of the rooms at dear Ballymohr, and the table was spread with, what the children called, a 'company tea.' We had come to a land of plenty, if not of peace.

"Molly cheered up over her tea, and made friends with Kate, who was to be the children's maid. Charlie was too tired to eat much, and I wouldn't leave him till I had seen him safe in bed.

"'My pillow-case has got frills to it, and we had silver spoons for nursery tea,' he remarked when he put his head upon the pillow. 'It's awfully grand, Sue!'

"'Isn't it?' I said cheerfully. 'You will enjoy being here, Charlie.'

"'No I won't,' said Charlie. 'It would be like the Egyptians; and I am not going to.'

"'Like the what?' I asked, perplexed.

"'No, I didn't mean Egyptians; I meant Israelites,' he answered earnestly. 'They were horrid, mean spalpeens, who loved the flesh-pots of Egypt better than their own country; and you said flesh-pots meant nice things to

eat and drink, and pretty things to look at, and soft things to lie on. It was *you* told us that story on Sunday. I want Ballymohr, and I am not going to have Sir Charles for a "ruler over me," and I *won't* enjoy his flesh-pots. Molly and you can if you like, 'cause, of course, it's different for girls.'

"'Hush, Charlie!' I said feebly. 'You are very ungrateful to talk like that, when Sir Charles is doing all he can for you and Molly. But you don't mean what you are saying.'

"'You just see if I don't!' said Charlie, and the worst of it was, he *did*.

"On my return to the drawing-room I found my host giving an entertaining description of our journey. I could not help smiling, in spite of myself, when he mimicked his godson's voice and manner.

"'He escaped from the ladies' cabin and came up on deck,' said Sir Charles, 'where, on encountering me, he steadily pretended that we had nothing in the world to do with one another. I spoke to him once, but he looked

at me as if he had never set eyes on me before and hoped that he never should again. I've seldom seen anyone capable of giving such an unmitigated snub! Upon my word, Miss Susie, I think it's about time that Charlie had a tighter hand over him.'

" 'He was always good before,' I said warmly. 'Charlie is no trouble——'

" 'When he has his own way,' put in Sir Charles dryly. 'So I should imagine!'

" Lady Bargreave smiled, and drew me down on to the sofa, into a nest of blue and pink cushions.

" 'The two Charles' have evidently points in common,' she remarked. 'But we won't let them disturb our peace, my dear.'

" She gave me tea out of a cup that looked like a pink-lined egg-shell, after which, to my relief, she had mercy on my shyness, and let me alone. She had an immense amount of tact.

" I sat and watched and listened as if I were at a play.

" Lady Bargreave was as decidedly French

in appearance as her son was English. Her big black eyes flashed like her diamonds, and she gesticulated slightly when she spoke.

“Sir Charles’ humour was dry, and occasionally cynical; her fun sparkled like champagne; but I noticed some points of resemblance between them. Sir Charles had inherited from her the remarkably clear pronunciation that I had seen commented on in the papers. It was a natural, not, as people supposed, an acquired characteristic. Both mother and son gave the same impression of ‘finish’ in their movements as well as in their speech. When Sir Charles put coal on the fire he did it without noise, and just in the right place. When his mother offered cake to me she did it prettily.

“I have often found myself taking pleasure in watching her walk across a room, or make the tea.

“I felt very large and awkward beside her, but I was filled with admiration for her dainty gracefulness. I came to the conclu-

sion that I liked her much more than I liked Sir Charles.

"Sir Charles dined out that night, rather to my relief, and Lady Bargreave sent me off to rest when dinner was over, with the same sprightly decision that she had shown in packing the children off to the nursery.

"I went to look at Charlie and Molly before I went to bed. I always had done that since the day their mother died. Molly was asleep, but Charlie was wide awake.

" 'I say, Sooly, doesn't it feel queer to be here?' said he.

" 'Yes, dreadfully queer,' I answered dolefully.

" 'But never mind,' said Charlie, who had a contradictory way of cheering up when I lost heart. 'Never mind, Sue, I mean to grow as fast as ever I can, and as soon as I am grown up I'll fight my way out of this beastly place, and knock down Sir Charles, and take you and Molly home again!'

"I cannot help laughing now when I think

of those first days in Eaton Square, and of how overwhelmingly home-sick and 'fish-out-of-waterish' we felt!

"Molly recovered soonest. She was a sweet-tempered child, and she made friends quickly. I was more tolerably at ease after we had got through the first fortnight, but Charlie remained unreconciled.

"I certainly had plenty of new experiences. We saw more people in the course of a week at Eaton Square than we had seen in a year at Ballymohr. They seemed to me to belong to a different world from mine. I used to sit in a corner listening, but not venturing to open my lips. Sometimes I was amused and interested, but more often I was longing to be back at home, they were all so dreadfully clever.

"There was a fashionable portrait-painter, who dropped in after dinner, a middle-aged man, with wavy grey hair, and blue eyes, and a singularly mobile mouth. He brought out reminiscences of his boyhood, that were like beautiful pictures. His stories didn't always

tally, but Lady Bargreave said that I musn't be too particular, nor expect everyone to conform to nursery morality. He asked me to sit to him for my hair, which he said was the real Titian red.

"Then there was a young attaché to some foreign embassy, I forget which; he was almost the only quite young man who came often to the house, and he was supposed to be very rising. He had a fair complexion, and moustaches that were waxed at the ends like a foreigner's. He had prominent, light eyes, and he could talk in every language under the sun. He was devoted to Lady Bargreave, but girls bored him. I once heard him declare that he never found a woman worth cultivating before she was six-and-twenty. Judge Dashwood, to whom he made the remark, puckered up his funny old face with amusement.

"'No more did I, my boy!—when I was your age—but *now* I prefer 'em young and fresh,' said he.

"The old judge's stories were sometimes a

trifle broad, but his jolly laugh was infectious, and his burly presence welcome. He was my sole admirer, but, unfortunately, he was too grand a person to be allowed to take me in to dinner.

“Among all these more or less distinguished men there was one man who, to this day I am proud to remember, was my friend, and to whom, though I do not think he knew it, I have cause to be grateful.

“Professor Mowbray was quite an old man, even when I first met him. He had written some wonderfully learned book, of which I had never even heard till I came to London, though it was, I believe, of European celebrity. His cracked voice and his grotesque appearance amused me at first. His features looked as if they had been chiselled with a very blunt instrument; his massive forehead was too big for proportion, and he was extraordinarily thin. Yet, in a very short time, I lost any sense of absurdity in connection with him. I was fascinated by his absolute goodness. The professor belonged to no church,

but nothing will ever persuade me that he was not a saint.

“I am sure that he would have given his life, as a matter of course, and with no thought of reward, for the sake of advancing truth. I think that he was faithful to a high ideal in the smallest transactions of daily life. He was unworldly to a fault, and simple-minded as a child. When I knew him better my liking for him increased.

“One could smile very tenderly at the professor’s peculiarities; but I think I should have distrusted anyone who really laughed at him. One seemed to see his soul through his insignificant body. When I saw him speaking earnestly I was always reminded of the story of Moses, who came down from the mount with his face shining, because the Lord had spoken with him, ‘as a man speaketh with his friend.’

“The professor’s face was both the ugliest and the most beautiful that I had ever seen; and if you think that that is a bull you make a great mistake. It is a fact. He was a great

friend of Sir Charles, who, I noticed, paid him great deference, even when he didn't agree with him.

"I had plenty of time to look on, for, naturally, I was now last and least, instead of first and most indulged. I missed all the spoiling that Uncle Dennis and everyone else had bestowed on me at home; but I was growing fast in mind. 'Growing' is seldom a comfortable proceeding.

"The professor astonished me one evening by seating himself by me and attacking me on the subject of my silence.

"'You never talk,' he said. 'You sit in a corner and take notes. That isn't natural to your age. You are young enough to have plenty of decided opinions on every subject.'

"'At home they told me that I was a great chatterbox,' I said, trying to laugh. 'But then it was home! I've nothing to say here. No one would be interested in the things we care about; and I am getting to like looking on best.'

"'Fiddlesticks!' said the professor. 'Look-

ing on at a feast is for toothless old fogies like me. Don't you begin it too soon. It's not half such fun as eating, I assure you.'

"'London people frighten me,' I explained; for the professor's kindly, shrewd eyes seemed to draw the heart out of me.

"'They don't seem quite to believe in anything. I don't dare to be natural. And excepting you, they are so ashamed of showing any enthusiasm.'

"'H'm,' said the professor. 'I said that you'd been taking notes. Put away the note-book, my dear young lady, and enjoy yourself while you can. Yes, we're so terribly afraid of the daws that we hide our hearts in our boots sometimes. I don't know that *that's* quite the right place for them, though perhaps it's better than wearing them on our sleeves, eh?'

"'Do you think they have really got any?' I asked doubtfully.

"Sir Charles' voice broke in on our conversation. He was telling a cynical story about a witness in a trial for slander.

"We both listened to the point of the anecdote; Sir Charles' stories were always sharply pointed. Then the professor looked at me again over his spectacles.

"'You've heard of the Queen of Spain's legs, haven't you?' he said. 'They weren't to be mentioned, you know; but the poor thing had probably as good a pair as you or I have. Perhaps they may have been a little stiff from lack of exercise, as you say your tongue is.'

"'I'll try to talk more,' I said. 'But, you see, I am not clever, and I wasn't meant to live in a clever set. No one will want to listen to me.'

"'Good Lord! what prigs we must be!' cried the professor. '*Do* talk and give us some chance of contradicting such an assertion. Come along.'

"He drew me into the middle of the room, and I opened my lips to please my kind old friend.

"I must own that, the ice once broken, I found it both easy and enlivening to chatter. One certainly likes one's fellow creatures bet-

ter when one is not a silent spectator. At least, that was my experience; for the professor was right; I was no philosopher, or born critic, and it was not natural to me to sit apart.

"I was much happier after I had found my tongue. Indeed, from that evening I began to enjoy the 'society' side of my new life, and Lady Bargreave congratulated me on the change.

"Lady Bargreave had real social genius. She not only sparkled herself, but she also knew how to appraise the social gifts of her guests, and to set them off to the best advantage. She remodelled my dresses and taught me to do my red hair becomingly, and made me sing Irish songs in the evenings.

"It amused her to see the effect that London had on such raw material; she liked to draw out my opinions, and she gave me many useful hints. I admired her greatly, and all the worldly wisdom I possess I derived from her; but I could never open my mind to her so frankly as I could to the professor.

"Lady Bargreave had a quick wit, and a keen perception of the ridiculous. The small weaknesses of her neighbours never escaped her observation, though she was less apparently satirical than was Sir Charles, having, as she once told me, learned the folly of making enemies. She had plenty of tact, and she was very charming, but I have sometimes felt that, except in one case, she had very little mercy in her. Like many lively and amusing persons, she was subject to occasional fits of extreme depression, against which she fought most pluckily. She disliked any open expression of sympathy, and though she was excellent company, and had a wide circle of acquaintances, she made few friends.

"I do not think that I had been many weeks in the house before it dawned on me that she had no affection for Sir Charles. She played hostess to his friends, and was always alert and ready to talk to him on the rare occasions when he dined at home without guests. They were both too proud to quarrel vulgarly, and I do not know how it was that I

discovered that what little love was lost between them was, oddly enough, on his side.

"Lady Bargreave took me to hear Sir Charles plead on one occasion. The trial was one that had made an immense sensation, and, like everyone else, I was completely carried away by the speech for the defence. Nearly all the ladies cried I remember; but Lady Bargreave only nodded approvingly whenever her son made a point. Sir Charles accompanied us home, and I congratulated him warmly in the drawing-room before dinner.

"'How glad you must be to have made that poor girl's innocence clear,' I said. I was so excited about the trial that I was not even the least shy. 'I think it is a grand thing to do, after all.'

"'What does the "after all" mean, eh, Miss Susie?' he asked, with a twinkle of fun in his eyes that rather dashed my enthusiasm.

"'I was thinking that I used to wonder how any man could wish to be anything but a soldier or a sailor,' I explained, though his

amusement made me grow red. 'It has only just struck me that it may be just as splendid to do what you do, and to make the right triumphant and the wrong ashamed.'

"Lady Bargreave laughed her musical ripple of a laugh. 'My dear Charles, I hope you feel abashed before Miss Susie's innocence,' she said. 'I am afraid it's greater than your client's.'

"'Do you mean,' I cried, looking from one to the other aghast, 'that you don't believe in her, in spite of all you said? How *could* you have made a speech like that and not meant it? How could you have declared——'

"'My private belief had nothing to do with it,' said Sir Charles. 'I was there to plead for her—not to judge her.'

"But I was still thinking of his glowing defence, of the closing words of his speech, the triumphant assurance in his voice, the proud ring of conviction that had so stirred me. So it was all acting. He had doubted, doubted all the time, even if he wasn't absolutely convinced, of the girl's guilt.

I suppose it was because his eloquence had moved me that this discovery so shocked me. No wonder he sneered at enthusiasm when he knew what his own was made of.

“A sudden longing to get right away from this place, a wave of homesickness, came over me.

“‘Susie is quite horrified,’ said Lady Bargreave. ‘My good child, haven’t you observed before that Sir Charles always believes people guilty till they are proved innocent, and keeps his sentiment for the courts?’

“There was a touch of bitterness in her voice. Sir Charles shrugged his shoulders.

“‘I suppose you have been hearing from Ernest?’ he remarked, apparently *a propos* to nothing. The delicate colour deepened in Lady Bargreave’s cheek.

“‘My poor, dear boy!’ she said softly, and I knew that it was not of Sir Charles that she was speaking, for neither adjective applied to him. ‘My poor boy! He has been so unlucky lately. He has lost every penny of his own.’

“‘And a good many of other people’s, eh?’ said Sir Charles grimly. His voice sounded cutting, and I was relieved when the butler interrupted further speech by announcing dinner.

“One can hardly stay a month in a house without getting occasional glimpses of the family skeleton. I had stumbled against this one before.

“Lady Bargreave was as sprightly as ever all dinner-time, and Sir Charles only a shade more caustic than usual; but the little incident strengthened my impression of his hardness. I noticed later, that when Lady Bargreave had anything disagreeable to say to her son, anything that she was rather afraid of his taking amiss, she always introduced the subject when a third person was in the room. She was certainly a little bit afraid of him, and the presence of another person tied his tongue, for he disliked discussing family matters in public. It was an adroit way of putting him at a disadvantage, and, little as I liked him, I had, at times, the unwilling conscious-

ness that Sir Charles played the more fairly of the two.

“Lady Bargreave told me about Ernest after that. He was her younger son, and he had been very unfortunate. Something—I do not know exactly what—had happened that had necessitated his leaving England for a time.

“When he returned after some years absence, his mother did her best to give him a fresh start. The Jews, however, got him into more trouble; they regularly persecuted him, and Lady Bargreave paid his debts for the third time in order to set him straight.

“She was obliged to appeal to Sir Charles on this last occasion. Sir Charles forbade his brother the house, and made him a ridiculously small allowance, on the understanding that he bothered his family no more.

“‘The bargain was unnatural,’ said Lady Bargreave; ‘though poor Ernest had perforce agreed to it.’

“Apparently it was made only to be broken. If Nature was too strong for the

mother and the son who loved each other, whose was the blame? Why, of course, that rested on the person who made so monstrous a condition!

"The little lady brought out her conclusion with so much assurance that I quite acquiesced at the moment; and I verily believe that, by some process of mental juggling, she persuaded herself that all the misdoings of her younger son ought to be debited to his elder brother.

"'Charles has taken all the luck of the family. He is invariably successful,' she said. 'He has a fortune, and a reputation. He might show his brother more generosity, one would think. But, of course, very ambitious men cannot afford hearts! Ernest is different. Had he been the lucky one——'

"She left the sentence unfinished, but I knew what she implied. She meant that Ernest would never have driven a hard bargain over a miserable pittance. Poor Ernest!

"All her tenderness was given to her black sheep, and, if it had been possible to wash him white, I think she would have done it. Alas!

I fear now that women's tears, though hot and bitter, have small effect; but I did not think that then!

"At nineteen one is very hopeful! I was convinced that 'poor Ernest' had been hardly treated by his brilliant and successful brother. We—oh, the arrogance of youth!—*we* would give him new courage, and be repaid by his everlasting reformation.

"I do not think that Lady Bargreave could have really believed in that dream; but it was a pleasure to her to hear her son spoken of by someone who didn't despise him. She would listen to my cheerful prophecies with a softened look, and once she even kissed me! That was on the day on which we had gone together to pawn her diamonds, and I knew, of course, where the money went to.

"All her money went that same way, and I was afraid Sir Charles would notice that her hands were bare of rings. Somehow I felt a little guilty towards my host (who had been very practically kind to me), and that prevented my being at ease with him.

"It was in the afternoon after the diamond expedition that Charlie had a scene with his guardian. Sir Charles had been wonderfully forbearing up to this time, though I always felt nervously convinced there would be a storm if he saw much of his ward; and I was on thorns if the two were in the same room for five minutes together.

"Charlie was difficult to manage just then, and he still steadfastly refused to acknowledge Sir Charles' authority.

"'He isn't my guardian so long as I won't be guarded! No more than Oliver Cromwell was Montrose's king!' he declared, and he would glare defiance at his host (who never took any notice of unspoken protests) in a manner worthy of a leader of loyalists.

"Sometimes I laughed over the absurdity of this small rebel; sometimes I secretly felt more inclined to cry. I knew that an under-current of loyalty to his dead father gave force to Charlie's antagonism to the ruling powers. I was sure that the child felt as if his hand were against every man's, and every man's

hand against his. But I could not coax him into good behaviour. Charlie, all through his life, bought his experience at a high price, and took nothing for granted.

“Both children were in the drawing-room (Lady Bargreave had gone to her room, so I had joyfully taken the opportunity of having them downstairs) when Sir Charles unexpectedly came in.

“I fear we all appeared dismayed, for he assured us at once that he wasn’t going to stay long.

“‘I only wanted a cup of tea. Don’t let me stop all your fun,’ he said. ‘Please don’t send the children away, I won’t eat them. What have you and my mother been about this afternoon?’ he asked without any suspicion, and merely by way of saying something, but I blushed and felt awkward, and seeing that, for some inexplicable reason, I was embarrassed, he turned to Charlie without waiting for a reply.

“‘It’s your birthday to-morrow, isn’t it?’ he said.

“Charlie was playing at being shut up in a prison and starved to death by a wicked governor, who tried to persuade him to recant, but whom he answered with ‘proud contempt.’ Molly could never act the governor, because she couldn’t bear even to pretend to be unkind to Charlie, or to see him starving; so Charlie had to take two parts and be alternately oppressor and oppressed; and Molly played ‘a kind woman who secretly supplied the prisoner with milk through the key-hole.’

“Charlie looked at Sir Charles exactly in the way that the starving hero looked at the wicked governor, and vouchsafed no reply.

“Sir Charles sat down by the tea-table and pulled Molly on to his knee. Molly had a sneaking affection for him, and would have enjoyed his attentions, if Charlie would have allowed her.

“‘I’ve brought home a present for your brother,’ he said; ‘he shall have it if you can find it.’

“Molly, unable to resist the temptation, set her dimpled fingers to work diving into

his pockets and feeling up his sleeves, with little giggles and shouts of laughter. Her round, baby face made a pretty contrast to his keen, sharply-cut one; but Charlie turned his back on both, and stood staring into the empty fire-place, and I watched him anxiously.

"The present was done up in brown paper, and Sir Charles held it out at last, after a playful struggle with Molly. 'Here you are!' he said. 'Come! be quick, my man. Catch!'

"He threw it while he spoke; it hit Charlie on the shoulder and fell at his feet. The boy reddened to the roots of his hair, but made no effort to pick it up.

"'Why, surely you are not such a baby as to mind that!' said his godfather. He thought Charlie was angry at the blow, and so for the moment did I.

"Charlie gave the parcel a slight push with his foot. I think he rather longed to know what it contained in spite of all his dignity.

"'I'm not a baby; but I don't want your presents. I won't have it, anyhow!' he said.

"Sir Charles raised his eyebrows. 'Your manners would bear improving,' he remarked. 'When I was your age I should have had my ears pulled if I had answered my elders and betters like that.' He picked up his rejected gift, and put it in his pocket.

"'Don't you spoil him rather too much, eh, Miss Susie?' he asked.

"He spoke with a smile, but I answered hotly, because the words brought back a scene of long ago, when this lawyer was a stranger to us and dear Uncle Dennis had accused me of the same thing—Uncle Dennis who petted the children even more than I did!

"'No! I don't! and, even if I did, he has no one else to—now,' I cried. 'If I didn't stand up for Charlie who would?'

"'Well if you do all the spoiling, I suppose that I shall have to do the whipping,' said Sir Charles; 'for if I don't who will?' And though he spoke half in jest, I feared he was a little bit in earnest too, which made me both indignant and uneasy.

"Charlie wasn't the least bit penitent, but

I knew that he would have a wakeful night, and probably a headache after the excitement of being naughty. He was the oddest compound of extreme nervousness and audacity, and I couldn't bear to think of what might happen if Sir Charles took him in hand. I was horrified when that gentleman remarked at dinner that he meant to see more of the child.

“‘Please don't pack him off whenever I come in,’ he said. ‘He must get used to me some day.’ And, after that, I felt more than ever as if we were living over a volcano. Charlie was certainly trying. I must own, on looking backwards, that I think that many men would have lost patience sooner than did Sir Charles; and the odd thing was that the child was secretly rather afraid. I could see that it cost him an effort to disobey his guardian; yet he did so systematically and whenever he had the chance, which wasn't often; for Sir Charles never went out of his way to give orders, being too busy as well as too strong a man to be fussily tyrannical. At last the explosion I had always felt impending came.

"It was a rainy afternoon, and the children and I were playing in the dining-room. We were playing at the 'Crimea.' Molly and I were in the trenches and the backgammon men were outlying troops. Charlie had a good deal of dramatic talent, and a decided gift for 'speechifying,' which last he turned to good account in later life. The moment Sir Charles asked me whether I knew where the *Times* was, I remembered that Charlie had folded it into a general's cocked hat. It was unfortunate. We always forgot that we ought to take the paper of the preceding day.

"'I am so sorry. It will be dreadfully creased. I never thought that anyone would want to *read* it,' I said rather ruefully.

"Sir Charles replied that it 'did not matter' in the very polite tone that people use when they mean that it matters a great deal.

"I sometimes felt that I should have been more at ease with him if he had only lost his temper *comfortably* now and then.

"'I am obliged to trouble you for it. I want to refer to a statement that Sir J——

L—— made in the House last night,' he said, and held out his hand.

"Charlie, who was wearing the cocked hat, set his back against the wall, and shook his head.

"‘It's not the *Times* now,' he said.

"Sir Charles raised his eyebrows. ‘My dear fellow, it is certainly not worth telling lies about,' he remarked coldly; and I hastily interposed.

"‘Charlie never tells lies! Charlie, you'll give the paper to me, won't you? I'll make you another hat instead.'

"Charlie pushed me back rather vigorously. He was excited, and perhaps thought that I had deserted him. It almost looked as though he had struck me, but, of course, he did not mean to do that. Sir Charles strode across the room, and took him by the shoulders.

"‘Come, come, young man! *that's* more than I'll stand,' he said. ‘You've been making a little ass of yourself for some time past, and I've taken no notice. I supposed that

you'd outgrow it; but you have no excuse whatever for behaving badly to Miss Susie. Beg her pardon at once!'

"He shook Charlie but very slightly while he spoke, and Charlie made a futile effort to wriggle out of his grasp. Anything like a threat always had the contrary to the desired effect upon the boy, in spite of all his nervousness.

"*'I won't—not if you kill me!'* he cried with an excited little gasp.

"Sir Charles shrugged his shoulders. 'Do try not to be so silly,' he said. 'No one wants to kill you! but, if you can't behave like a gentleman, you are not fit company for your sister and Miss Susie. Are you going to say you are sorry or not? Oh, very well, you are not! Then you may enjoy your own society till you come to your senses.'

"He picked up Charlie bodily as he spoke, and bore him off kicking and struggling, and Molly and I followed, Molly crying for sympathy.

"It was the first real tussle that Charlie

had had with his guardian, and I was dreadfully afraid that he would get hurt, and was proportionately relieved when Sir Charles deposited his charge in the library and came out, looking rather hot, and locked the door behind him.

“ ‘I have not murdered that precious child,’ he said, with a twitch at the corner of his lips when he encountered our doleful and reproachful faces. Then he picked up the cause of the contention, which had got torn in the struggle, put the library key in his pocket, with rather a humorous glance at me, and went upstairs.

“My pride was of quite a different kind from my small cousin’s. It had no ‘staying power,’ and it always gave way under pressure; so Molly and I followed him.

“We coaxed, and entreated, and argued, and pleaded on behalf of Charlie. But Sir Charles kept possession of the key. If he had been Irish, he couldn’t have had the heart!

“He wouldn’t even let Molly comfort Charlie through the keyhole, and, when tea-

time came, she made her bread and milk quite salt by crying into it.

“We didn’t make the least impression on him, except that he was rather amused and inclined to tease us both. And poor Charlie *hungry!* I didn’t wonder that Sir Charles’ mother thought him hard, and, somehow, I said so. Dreadful things slip off my tongue when I am angry, things that spring up at the moment, and come out hot, and that I afterwards repent of having said, whereas Sir Charles never let fly an angry speech, unless he really meant it and had sharpened the point deliberately; consequently his arrows generally struck, while mine rebounded on myself.

“Lady Bargreave laughed at my perturbation when she came into the drawing-room, and I poured out my story. Sir Charles didn’t seem to think it worth while to tell his version.

“‘Really, you and Charles are as good as a play over those children,’ she said. ‘You ought to hit on the *juste milieu* between you,

with your diametrically opposite ideas.' But she yawned deliberately behind her paper. The subject didn't interest her. She never took any responsibility for her son's wards, and, I think, thought it extraordinarily foolish of him to have got 'let in' for the care of them.

"'He ought to have had his tea an hour ago!' I cried indignantly. 'Don't you *care* that a poor little boy has been shut up all alone without any food for three hours?'

"'Where?' asked Lady Bargreave, with a faint accession of interest; and Sir Charles actually laughed.

"'He is not chained in the cellar—or the coal-hole,' he said, 'as you might infer from Miss Susie's tone. I deposited him in my own arm-chair in the library; it's the most comfortable chair in the house. He won't arrive at repentance in less than four hours, I should say, and it's a pity to disturb the process. Charlie can't die of starvation between lunch and bed-time. If it were Molly

now, I allow that she would be sorry in five minutes.'

"'Molly is much the sweeter-natured of the two; she is quite a nice little thing,' said Lady Bargreave; and after a moment, she added: 'Considering you are only distant cousins, it's odd that Charlie should be so very like you, Charles.'

"Sir Charles looked at me with a twinkle in his eyes. 'Miss Susie will never, never forgive you for that, mother,' he said.

"He went out presently, with the key still in his pocket. Lady Bargreave was too full of anxiety about her younger son to listen to my lamentations over Charlie. It made my heart ache to see how careworn her pretty old face had grown. She had given 'Ernest' every penny she could raise. He was hanging about in London; but she did not tell Sir Charles that; for Sir Charles might stop the allowance, if he discovered that the condition he had made was broken.

"My sympathy was with the mother who yearned over her prodigal, but the unwilling

compunction that had before assailed me made itself felt again. I knew at the bottom of my heart that Sir Charles was a just man, and that he was being treated with something less than justice. I wonder now whether he guessed rather more than he appeared to. Perhaps, having vainly tried to prevent his mother from being fleeced, he sometimes looked the other way for the sake of peace. It may have been so, for he was sharp-sighted, and, in spite of his flow of words, was really reticent.

“I was not allowed to unlock the library door till seven o’clock. Then Sir Charles at last gave me the key, but with strict injunctions not to let the prisoner out till he had said that he was sorry.

“‘Honour bright! Now are you to be trusted, Miss Susie?’ he said. ‘Tell Charlie that, if he begs your pardon, and promises me that he won’t be such a little fool again, he may have some supper and go to bed. He may send me word through you,’ he added. ‘I won’t expect too much of him. Really,

Master Charlie fought me so hard that he deserves to be treated to the honours of war. I must teach him to double his fists with the thumb outside, though, and to hit straight. I can feel the marks of his teeth on my hand yet. He has plenty of pluck, which is the chief thing after all!’

“He was perfectly good-humoured. It would have taken more than a small boy’s fit of temper to make him angry, and I was mollified by his last remark, and undertook that the conditions of peace should be carried out; wherein I reckoned rashly. I opened the door of the library. I was half afraid Charlie might be lying exhausted on the floor, faint from want of his tea, or crying himself ill, though Charlie very seldom cried. There was a pungent smell of burnt paper, and the room was empty. ‘Charlie! Charlie!’ I cried, ‘are you hiding? Do come out *please!* It’s only I.’

“The heavy curtains in front of the window moved as if in answer. It was getting dark, and I fancied I could distinguish his

figure behind the folds. I pulled them aside quickly; the shutters were unfastened; at first I thought the window was open. Then I trod on a huge piece of glass, and discovered that the pane was broken right away from the frame. The hole was enormous; a man could almost have squeezed through it, and a dreadful thought of burglars breaking into the room and stealing my little cousin came over me. I tried to peer out into the dusk. The window opened on to leads, and beyond the leads was a narrow strip of smoke-blackened dismal 'square.' The evening air, moist and warm, blew in my face; a black cat, stealing stealthily along, glared at me with his yellow eyes, and then bounded noiselessly away. I climbed on to a chair and pushed back the bolt of the window, which I tried to open. It was heavy, but desperation gave me strength. I *must* find Charlie. I threw it up with a wrench that made my side ache, and ran out into the square, down the stone steps, that left a black mark an inch deep on my poor dress. Pah! what a disgusting place London was.

"I am sure I must have looked quite mad, rushing round that apology for a garden; searching behind every tree—there were only three big enough to hide anyone—and disturbing the cat again, in the cockney 'summer-house.' Charlie wasn't to be found, and a sob of fright rose in my throat. I was looking once more, calling him hopelessly, when I ran up against Sir Charles, who was strolling round more leisurely.

"‘So the young rascal has sold me!’ he said, quite cheerfully. ‘Upon my word, Charlie knows how to do things thoroughly while he is about it. He goes on the principle of “as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb.” Why, you are shivering, and you’ve got no hat on! Come along in; it’s evident he is not here. What did you ask? Am I—am I afraid Charlie is—is stolen?’

"His laugh rang out irrepressibly through the square.

"‘I pity the thief. He’ll get more than he bargained for. No, Miss Susie, I don’t think London burglars have any predilection

for naughty, little boys. Do you suppose they carry them off in black bags after the manner of old-fashioned bogeys?’

“‘Don’t laugh, please,’ I cried piteously, ‘for, if Charlie is lost—’ I couldn’t finish the sentence, I was so overwhelmed at the reflection.

“Charlie! my petted, delicate, little charge, who got a cough if he was out in the east wind, and who was ill if he was over-tired. Charlie! to wander about alone in those endless London streets, in the dark and cold, with nowhere to lay his head all night. Like most imaginative children, he was afraid of the dark, though it was a fear he would have sooner died than have confessed to.

“We returned to the library, and Sir Charles lighted the gas, which danced and flickered in the draught that blew in from the window. His keen eyes made me blush, for I knew that I was looking quite distraught, and I fancied he despised emotional people. At the same time the capability with which he always impressed me was something

of a comfort, and, when he assured me that Charlie was sure to be found, and that probably before we were many hours older, I felt partially relieved.

“He turned back at the hall door to tell me that I might open any telegram or letter that might come in his absence. I was grateful to him for thinking of that.

“‘I shall go to the docks,’ he said. ‘I saw Charlie deep in “The Stowaways” yesterday, and I heard him asking where the ships started from.’

“The remark struck me, even then, when my mind was full of anxiety about Charlie, as showing how much Sir Charles observed.

“‘You will remember that Charlie is very delicate, won’t you?’ I said anxiously; ‘and, if you find him, you will not be too—’ but he was gone before I could finish that sentence.

“I went up to my room to dress for dinner after Sir Charles had gone off on his quest. I didn’t feel inclined to eat, and at home we shouldn’t have thought of dining if Charlie

were lost. But Lady Bargreave hated a fuss, and I knew just how she would look at me if I went into the drawing-room with flushed cheeks and blown-about hair. Her low laugh was like cold water down one's back sometimes. I was rather late. I changed my dress quickly, and ran downstairs. I had felt my own trouble heavy enough; yet, when I opened the drawing-room door, I knew that I stood in the presence of a tragedy that was more hopeless than any that had ever, thank God! touched *my* life.

"Like other people, I had had my griefs and losses; but that bitterest grief of all, the helpless misery that a woman feels through someone who is losing *himself*, his very soul—so far, at least as her dim eyes can see; *that* had never come nigh me!

"Lady Bargreave was standing in the lamp-light, with both her hands on her son's arm, and her delicate face uplifted. Her expression was a revelation to me, in its yearning tenderness and pain. She looked both older and younger than usual. Younger, because

love has no age; older, because there was a suggestion of feebleness in the way she clung to Mr. Bargreave that was unlike her usual upright self-dependence, and her lips were quivering. He moved his arm suddenly and roughly, and then she stood upright and rested her hand (and I could see she was trembling with the earnestness with which she had been speaking) on the back of a chair. The man's gesture made me wish to be a man, that I might kick him!

“‘Thou shalt not cast thy pearls before the swine, nor give that which is holy unto the dogs.’ I never knew what that meant till then.

“‘Oh, of course, you can say so! All you’ve got! I daresay! But Charles is coining money to the tune of thousands. Why do you let him waste it on those d—d Irish beggars? It’s beastly hard luck that he should live like this, and yet have enough to squander, and that I should be put off with a pittance; and you know you were done about those diamonds; you ought to have— Oh! by Jove!——’

“He had seen me, and he turned with a movement of surprise; then his face broadened into a smile. He stared at me with an insolent admiration that I had never been subjected to before, and that made me feel as if someone had bespattered me with mud.

“‘Introduce me,’ he whispered, and I turned and fled.

“That was the first and the last time I ever met Mr. Ernest Bargreave. One sight of him shattered my pretty little illusions. I had been quite prepared to take the part of that poor black sheep, quite ready to think his successful brother a Pharisee, and even to build castles in the air about ‘reforming’ him with my generous and unexpected sympathy. My dear, having seen him, I owned with a shudder that the reformation of bad characters was not for me!

“It was odd too. Mr. Bargreave was not ugly; indeed, he might almost have been termed handsome, in a somewhat florid and high-coloured style. He did not look wicked,

like the villain of a play, but yet—there is not another word for it—he *horrified* me.

“He had a foreign air (his grandmother was pure French); he was of middle height, inclined to be too stout; he had large, dark eyes, and wavy brown hair, and thick, rather loose lips.

“It is hard to explain why I so disliked him. Something indescribable, something, I fancy, in the way he smiled and moved, in the indefinably coarse quality in his voice, gave me that overpowering sensation of repulsion.

“I sat with Sir Charles’ fox terrier, who had taken a fancy to me, cuddled up in my arms on the stairs, waiting for Lady Barcheave’s son to go, and I said to myself, though with shame for my folly, that I *couldn’t* have touched or shaken hands with that man, not even for his mother’s sake.

“Sir Charles’ clear eyes and sarcastic mouth, and eminently self-controlled manner recurred to me with a sense of moral refreshment. He might be cynical and self-satisfied and worldly; I had thought him all that, and

perhaps with truth; but, at least, he was a gentleman, and I no longer wondered that he couldn't stand his brother.

“Mr. Bargreave stayed a long time, Sir Charles being safely out of the way. I was getting prosaically hungry, after all, when there was a violent ring at the front door bell, and, peeping through the banisters, I saw the yellow envelope of a telegram in the footman's hand. He did not take it into the drawing-room, for Lady Bargreave had given orders that she was not to be disturbed. It lay on the hall table, and I could not wait. I ran downstairs and read it; it was short and satisfactory, though rather surprising. It was addressed to Sir Charles, and contained this message:—

“‘Charlie safe at 6 Fitz-William Square,’ and it was signed ‘P. M.’

“First I laughed with relief and thankfulness, but I found myself very nearly crying too. Perhaps that was because I am Irish.

“At last Mr. Bargreave went away, and I rushed into the drawing-room, meaning to

tell the welcome news. Lady Bargreave guessed what I was trying to say before I said it.

“‘That troublesome child has been found. I congratulate you, my dear,’ she said. ‘But I felt convinced that he was safe. He has his godfather’s faculty for taking care of himself. You need never be uneasy about Charlie.’

“She might, perhaps, have been more sympathetic, but she succumbed to my earnest entreaties to be allowed to go to fetch my cousin home at once. She helped me to put on my bonnet and to fasten my cloak, and smiled at my impatience.

“‘You play at motherhood, little Susie,’ she said. ‘It is a pretty game. I wonder what will happen to Charlie when you marry! There! keep your cloak well round your neck, and don’t let anyone see that you are in evening dress.’

“Her playful words, the smile with which she spoke, the very look of her small, thin hands, from which the diamonds had gone, affected me. I wished to kiss her, but she

drew back gently from my proposed caress, and I did not dare to. Neither of us had mentioned Mr. Bargreave, but I fear she had seen the disgust with which he had inspired me. She was so reasonable a woman that I am sure her judgment held me clear of blame for my childish betrayal of feeling; but her heart, which I had stolen into by a short cut, through my championship of her son (of whom I knew nothing), was henceforth closed to me. After that evening I know that she never felt again to me as she had felt before.

“One man held the key to her affections. Alas! not the least of the misfortunes he brought on her was the fact that her very love for him made her lonely.

“The pity of it haunted me while I drove through London citywards. I had had a glimpse of the dark side of life that had startled me.

“*Why* did she love the bad son better than the good one? Why was anyone allowed to fall into sin? Why is there more joy over one sinner that repenteth than over ninety

and nine just persons? I was only nineteen, and I had had a happy and a healthy life. I had never before troubled my head about any of the problems of existence.

“That evening I turned from futile wondering to the joyful thought that dear Charlie was safe. I am not a meditative person. To this day I never puzzle at enigmas unless I am forced to. But sometimes they run at one’s side like banshees, wailing and mysterious, lifting questioning faces in the darkness; and it is hard to lay them!

“I had been in the city once before when Sir Charles had taken me to the Law Courts. The bustle and crowd had bewildered me then; I would not have ventured into it by myself for the sake of anyone but Charlie; but, to my surprise, at this time it was quiet. The city at night sleeps sounder than the West End!

“Fitz-William Square is one of those old-fashioned squares that were once fashionable, and that still have a solid dignity of their own. I made up my mind that some business

man, or, perhaps, some clerk or employé of Sir Charles' lived at No. 6. I hoped that, whoever it might be, he had children of his own, and had been kind to Charlie.

"I jumped out of the cab and lifted the heavy carved knocker, which was in the likeness of a grotesque head, like the knocker which frightened Scrooge.

"The door opened before I had had time to give a knock, and Professor Mowbray stood upon the doorstep.

"'Why, it is Miss Farrant! I expected Sir Charles!' he said. 'But, come in, come in. Charlie is upstairs talking to my daughter. He was knocked down by a 'bus, but not much hurt, only scratched. He is a brave little chap, and how very like his guardian! The likeness just proves what——'

"But I never learned what it proved, for I heard Charlie's voice calling 'Sue' on the landing above, and, running up, I held him in my arms.

"He disengaged himself with boyish promptitude. 'I am all right. Don't fuss!'

he said. 'Is—is Sir Charles here?' and I knew he was secretly relieved when I answered in the negative, by the eagerness with which he assured me that he didn't care if he was.

"Charlie's arm was tied up in a sling; he had a cut across his forehead, and his coat had been torn and carefully repaired.

" 'Miss Mowbray mended it,' said he. 'She lives on the sofa, and the professor and Jebbs (Jebbs is the servant) carry her up to bed every night. I want to stay and see them do that; it must be so funny. Come in and see her. She knows everything, so she'll know who you are. She knew all sorts of things about me and you and Molly. You needn't stop to 'plain anything.' And he took my hand and dragged me into the sitting-room.

"It was not like any other sitting-room, nor was Pauline Mowbray like any other woman. She was lying on her back, and was surrounded by books. It seemed to me that literature had eaten up the knick-knacks that women usually rejoice in. Books of reference lined the walls, books were heaped on cases

within reach of Pauline's hand. Books had invaded even the couch on which she lay. Some were piled at her feet, and one lay on the deal board on which she had been writing.

"Otherwise the room was very bare. The carpet was worn almost to the extinction of colour and of pattern. Two chairs and a writing-table comprised the remainder of the furniture. But a huge bowl full of roses stood on the table. Their rich sweetness filled the air; they were in striking contrast to the pervading austerity of Pauline's surroundings.

" 'Here's Susie,' said Charlie; and Pauline held out her hand, with a bright quickening of interest in her eyes.

"She had large hazel eyes. That is, I believe that their prevailing tint was hazel, but there were several in the irises, and the pupils were very big, and her eyelashes quite black. They were fuller of light and more expressive than any other eyes that I have ever seen.

"Her face was thin and small, her forehead square and broad, and her thick silky

black hair was cut short and curled about her head in rings. I heard, afterwards, that she had been very pretty once, when she was well. She was not exactly pretty when I knew her. 'Pretty' was hardly the right word.

" 'We have been waiting for you,' she said. 'Charlie and I were sure that you would come.' Then she looked beyond me, as if expecting to see someone else, and being disappointed, her eyes returned to me, and she patted the leathern arm-chair at her side invitingly.

" 'Do sit down and have some coffee,' she resumed, 'while Charlie puts on his things. You know how to find Jebbs, don't you, Charlie? Tell her to bring the coffee, please; but you need not be too quick about it, for I want to talk to Miss Farrant.'

" Charlie quitted us unwillingly. He was charmed with his new friend, though he seldom cared for strangers. Pauline turned to me.

" 'How frightened you must have been!' she said. 'He *is* a funny little boy, isn't he?

But he seems fond of you and of his sister, and he is quite original.'

"At which my heart went out to Pauline. She was evidently a person of discernment.

"Then she told me how and where her father had found Charlie. Her voice was low. I drew my chair close to her, that she should not have the trouble of raising it. She wore a bunch of Banksia roses in her belt, and their soft perfume seemed to strengthen the spell of her personality. She was like a white witch! She knew instinctively what her hearer wished to hear, and I am sure she could have told the same story to a dozen different persons, and have dwelt each time on the especial point that each of the dozen was most interested in.

"Charlie was the point of this story, and how well she understood him; how humorously and tenderly she described how the little boy had looked when her father had got out of the 'bus' and picked him up. The professor and the conductor had set him on his legs, and he had stood biting his lips, and deter-

mined not to cry. The professor had bound up his arm, which was bleeding, and had offered to take him home.

"Charlie had thanked him quite politely, but had stated that his home was in Ireland, and he couldn't go to it because it was let. 'Where I am staying now isn't home, it's only a house,' he had declared. 'And I would rather not tell you where it is, thank you, because you might want me to go back, and I don't want ever to have anything more to do with it, or with the person it belongs to.'

"Oh, dear! how well I could imagine Charlie saying that.

"A crowd at once collected round them in the sudden way in which a crowd does collect in London, and Charlie, who had stood the bandaging very well, turned suddenly faint, and had to be carried into a chemist's shop. When he came round again, the professor tried once more to persuade him to divulge who he was; but all he could extract was that the child had no father or mother, and that the 'person' whose house he had been living

in said he was his guardian, but that he (Charlie) wouldn't have him for one. The professor asked whether the 'person' was unkind to him, and Charlie, after a little consideration, said, 'No;' but would listen to no persuasion, and, having recovered from his faintness, stood up and bid the professor good-bye. The professor said that the child looked 'such a shrimp' to be starting off by himself, especially after having lost a good deal of blood and having had a nasty shake at the least, that he really couldn't allow him to go, and pressed him to tell where he was bound to, promising faithfully that he would not betray the secret, even if he should ever chance across 'the person' who claimed guardianship. On the strength of the promises, Charlie stated that he was going either to Africa or China, whichever he found a ship sailing for. The professor, to whom I felt more grateful than ever after this, suggested that China and Africa were both some way off; and, moreover, that they would still be there, even if the boy didn't start that evening, and that it

might be as well to have some tea, at any rate, before embarking. Charlie had had nothing to eat since lunch, and the proposal tempted him.

“‘Of course I sha’n’t expect any tea on board,’ he said. ‘They only give you ship’s biscuits and grog, you know, and I am quite prepared for hardships; stowaways always get knocked about.’

“Then hunger, and a childish sense of loneliness (after all he was only eight) overcame his resolution.

“‘But I am so tired and thirsty. It wouldn’t be giving in to have some tea *before* I am a stowaway, would it?’

“So the professor brought him home to tea, and to Pauline, who charmed the truth out of him.

“‘It gradually dawned on me that he must be Sir Charles’ little ward,’ she said, ‘but we didn’t telegraph till Charlie gave us leave, because,’ with a little smile, ‘because my father had made him a promise, and I should think that Charlie is a child who would always stick to a promise; isn’t he?’

“‘Yes,’ I said eagerly. ‘He is very honourable; one can trust him implicitly, like a grown-up person.’

“‘What trustworthy grown-up people you must have known!’ said Pauline.

“Her appreciation of Charlie again delighted me. I could have talked for hours about my favourite charge, and Pauline was such an inspiring listener. When I knew her better, I came to the conclusion that her vivid interest was one of her chief charms. It seldom failed her, even with the dullest. Perhaps she inherited, in another form, her father’s genius for detail. She was quaintly philosophical too, and often reminded me of the professor in the way she looked at life.

“It was sad that she should look at it from a sofa! She had a fine tact, and a refinement that prevented her from degenerating into inquisitiveness. Because she was a woman she was more interested in individuals than in humanity *en masse*, but she took a generous and broad view of most people. She never

asked indiscreet questions, but I found myself confiding in her.

“‘It was clever of you to persuade Charlie to tell you about himself, and to let you telegraph,’ I said, while I sipped my coffee and devoured bread and butter.

“Pauline had guessed that I had come away without having had any dinner.

“‘I talked about your anxiety,’ she said; ‘and I told him that I couldn’t understand his deserting you and his sister, when he was your only male relation—excepting, of course, “the person the house belongs to.” When he let out that his sister’s name was Molly, and his cousin’s Susie, I guessed his own.

“‘I should like—’ and a ripple of fun crossed her face, ‘I should like to see Sir Charles and Charlie together. It must be very funny.’

“‘I don’t find it so,’ I said ruefully. ‘If you were fond of Charlie you *wouldn’t* like it. It’s so very bad for him, and I am always in dread of what will happen next.’

“‘Are you?’ she said. The amusement

still rested in her beautiful eyes, while she looked at me. 'But,' she hesitated a moment, 'but I've known Sir Charles very well for a great many years, and I don't think you need be afraid; he isn't exactly a fool.'

"Charlie and the professor came in after that, Charlie looking very white and tired.

"The kind old professor offered to see us home, but Pauline read my wishes and prevented him.

"'We ought to finish correcting those proofs to-night; they must be sent off by the early post to-morrow,' she observed.

"'You didn't know that I had such a slave-driver of a daughter, did you?' he cried. But his eyes wandered longingly to the leathern chair I had vacated, and to the well-worn writing-table that, standing close to Pauline's sofa, told a tale of their own. I wondered to what hour in the night Pauline and he would work.

"The correcting must, however, have been interrupted after all, for when Charlie and I were driving away another hansom drew up at

the professor's door, and Sir Charles jumped out of it. He had come to fetch us, and I felt rather guilty. Charlie saw him too, and crept closer to me in the dark, and leaned his head, which I knew was aching, against my shoulder.

“‘I wonder what he'll do!—but I don't care,’ he said. Then, after a pause, ‘Have you had your dinner, Sue?’

“‘No, I didn't wait for it,’ I said. ‘Charlie darling, how could you have frightened us all so?’

“‘Oh, bother!’ said Charlie with a wriggle.

“‘If I say something, will you promise faithfully not to tell, Sooly?’ he asked.

“‘Of course,’ I said.

“When Charlie called me pet names I would always promise him anything. He didn't do it often, but he had a way of saying Sooly as if it were darling.

“‘Well—mind you don't,’ he responded, ‘I was awfully sorry I pushed you, Sooly. I didn't mean to hurt you a bit;—I—I nearly cried when I thought about it on the way to

the ship—only, I couldn't say I was sorry before, 'cos he told me to. And I did mean to save up all the money I ever earned to buy presents for you, and it's only for you I've come back, because Miss Mowbray says presents wouldn't make up, and that it was a shame of me to desert you. But it was going to be a very nice present. It was going to be a monkey—a green one I think; or else a parrot. Sailors generally send parrots.'

" 'A parrot wouldn't have made up in the least,' I said, half laughing, though I felt tears at the back of my eyes.

"Charlie sighed heavily. 'No—I s'pose not,' he said; 'I should like a parrot better than a boy if I was you. But, of course, you're different!'

"He was silent for a time, pondering I think, over the unreasonable peculiarities of girls. Then, 'I wish to-morrow was over,' he said, with a quiver in his voice.

" 'Charlie dear,' I said hesitatingly, 'you know you really have behaved badly to Sir Charles, but I don't believe that he'll be hard

on you, if you promise to be good now. I am sure he'll be sorry that your arm is hurt ; does it ache much ?'

" ' Yes ; but I don't want none of *his* sorrows,' said Charlie, sitting bolt upright, and speaking with more force than grammar.

" Sir Charles did not come in till nearly eleven.

" Charlie was safely in bed at last, and I had a book open on my lap.

" ' I don't know when I've seen a funnier sight than Susie trying to understand a French novel with the aid of a dictionary,' Lady Bargreave said, with the rippling laugh that somehow jarred on me that evening.

" I knew that she was sad below the laughter ; and a grief one does not dare to try to comfort is like a spectre in the room.

" She looked ill, and I suppose Sir Charles remarked it, for he spoke to her in a gentler tone than usual.

" ' You are very tired to-night, mother,

though I know you won't admit it,' he observed.

"‘I am tired of staying in all day, and Mrs. Jones has been calling,’ she replied, with a smile. ‘She discoursed on children and servants. I don’t mind gossip when its amusing, but *dull* gossip is unpardonable. It is a fearful thing to confess, but I am bound to own that, in spite of my sixty-four years, I cordially detest a “quiet afternoon,” and too much of the society of “domestic women.”’

“He consulted his pocket-book.

“‘I have a spare evening to-morrow. Shall we go to a theatre together for a treat?’

“‘Oh, very well—if you wish to,’ said Lady Bargreave. ‘But it would be rather dull to go by ourselves, would it not? Who shall we ask to go with us?’

“And her son’s face actually fell a little. Of course it would have been ridiculous for me to have been sorry for Sir Charles; he was surely not a person whose feelings were likely to be hurt; yet I could almost have fancied he felt snubbed.

"He looked at me and smiled good-naturedly.

"'You and I are so blasé, mother!' he said. 'Suppose we ask Miss Susie to sit between us and give us the benefit of her first impressions.'

"And, considering how badly Charlie and I had behaved, I thought that that was wonderfully kind of him.

"I had never seen a play before; I was in high spirits at the idea of going to one, and was wildly excited at the prospect. Sir Charles was amused at my delight, but I am quite sure he had not the very least conception of *how* vivid my 'first impressions' would be. I had read no modern novels when I came to London. Indeed I have never loved books. Charlie and Molly and Uncle Dennis had always quite satisfied my affections at Ballymohr. That night, while I watched the unfolding of the drama, I felt as if a new instinct had become self-conscious in me, as if a whole phase of life that always had been, and always would be, and yet that I had never recognised before, had suddenly become apparent to me!

"Sir Charles' voice broke in on my attention now and then with critical remarks. Lady Bargreave laughed at my intense interest in the love story on the stage; but I hardly heard a word they said. I leaned back when the curtain went down between the acts, and dried my tears. I felt as if the world around me had become fuller, more interesting, alive and throbbing with conflict and emotion.

"I suppose all true artists do priest's work, making clear to us the things of the spirit. This especial 'priestess' touched me only too keenly; and yet, somehow, it was not exactly for 'Claire' that my heart was beating. Moreover, her voice, so charged with love and pain, reminded me of another tragedy, that I hardly understood.

"'You know that I have given you everything—everything, Ernest.'

"Ah! But that was the sadder story of the two! The mutual love of men and women, the deep and tender passion of a mother, these were wonderful and touching mysteries. But when there was a Mr. Bargreave in the case;

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when the love was wasted and of no avail?
When——?

“‘I’ll never take you to see a tragedy again. You are much too soft-hearted!’ said Sir Charles, in my ear. ‘Don’t be so miserable about that undeserving young woman. Her woes will all be over in less than an hour, and she will be having a comfortable supper. Think of that.’

“‘I know that “Claire” is really Mrs. Kendal,’ I replied. ‘I keep on telling myself that. I *couldn’t* look on if I didn’t. But sad things do happen; if that weren’t so, *she* wouldn’t make one cry.’

“Sir Charles unfurled my fan and held it before my tear-stained face.

“‘Do you mean to say that you have only just discovered that sad things do happen?’ he said with an odd little laugh. ‘Why, Miss Susie, you—’ And then suddenly a number of voices cut his sentence short.

“A quickly spreading shout of ‘fire!’ rose in the gallery above us, and was caught up by the pit below.

“‘Sit still!’ he cried sharply. And he put his hand on my arm, and restrained me when I would have jumped up.

“Lady Bargreave kept her seat of her own accord, and smiled reassuringly at me.

“‘There’s plenty of time,’ she said. ‘Dear me! what a coward Demos is when he loses his head.’

“The manager came before the curtain and tried to arrest attention. There had been a slight accident, but there was no danger. In five minutes the piece would proceed. It was too late, however, to stop the rush for the door.

“I turned sick when I saw a woman slip down under the feet of the mob. The man who had been behind her trod on her in his mad struggle to get out; he was fighting his way, possessed by a perfect rush of terror. He momentarily turned a white, eager face towards us while he pushed on. I recognised him; he was Ernest Bargreave.

“‘Charles—I—I am faint,’ said Lady Bargreave, in a low, shaken voice. ‘You must get us out of this.’

"Sir Charles put his arm round her. 'He has got to the door. You may be sure he is safe enough,' he remarked, with an indescribable mixture of gentleness and contempt.

"'Come along, Miss Susie. Hold on to my other arm. The worst of the crush is over now. I think we may venture. You are not afraid, are you?'

"'Not in the least,' I said, and it was true, though I am not usually courageous.

"Whether one liked Sir Charles or not, he was the sort of person who inspired one with confidence in an emergency. I do not know why it was, but it certainly would never have been possible for me to have felt alarmed for my own safety while he was anywhere near.

"Lady Bargreave did not speak at all during the drive, and went straight up to her room when we reached home. Sir Charles looked hard at me, when we stood in the hall.

"'You are very white still,' he said. 'Come into the dining-room and have a glass of wine.'

“Then, when I was obediently drinking it, he asked suddenly :

“‘Did you recognise anyone in the pit? Ah—yes—I thought so!’ for the tell-tale colour flew to my cheeks. ‘Then you have met him here?’

“‘I didn’t mean to look as if I knew him—it was by accident. I had no business to have seen. It’s not fair to make me betray other people’s secrets,’ I cried in despair.

“Sir Charles finished sipping his claret deliberately; he never, I think, really spoke on impulse, though he occasionally appeared to in court. Then he put down his glass and turned to me.

“‘Miss Susie,’ he said rather sternly, ‘did my mother introduce you to—to him?’

“I don’t think he could bring himself to say ‘my brother.’

“‘No, she didn’t,’ I answered. I was glad that I could make the reply truthfully. ‘But I don’t know what right you have to question me,’ I added; for I was rather indignant at his having inveigled me into the dining-room

on the pretence of kindly solicitude, but in reality to cross-examine me.

“He looked immensely relieved, and said, ‘Well, good-night,’ taking no notice of my indignation, which made me, for the moment, feel like Charlie.

“I couldn’t sleep that night. The play, and Lady Bargreave, and Sir Charles, and that man with the horrible selfish fear in his face, and with his heel on the woman who had fallen, these all haunted me. I got up and opened my window, and looked out into the street, and I told myself that I wished I were back in dear Ireland. Life was simpler there.

“‘So soon as Charlie is happier I will go back to Ballymohr. The “mother” will willingly take me into the convent as a lay boarder; and I think she would let me help to take care of the children in the crèche,’ I reflected. ‘It is only for Charlie that I’ll stay a little, little longer.’

“I told myself all this quite cheerfully. And then ‘myself’ answered with an unreason-

able sharp terror, 'No, no! don't go yet—not yet.'

"Why, then, after all, this new life had become dear; it was twisting round my heart-strings; it was holding me tighter and tighter and tighter.

"Though I had wings like a dove, and could fly home now, this minute, yet I should not find again the old peace. Never again! One cannot step back into childhood. That paradise is guarded by the angel with the sword of fire, who led one out of it.

"I fancied I heard Charlie coughing while I sat by the window. I ran up to see that he was all right. He was asleep, and so was Molly. I lingered in the nursery, and told my beads by Molly's cot. I had forgotten them before, but the children's faces reminded me.

"The whole house had been turned topsyturvy for two days about some papers which Sir Charles had lost. I had never seen my imperturbable host so discomposed. It was unlike him to take everyone into his confi-

dence, and make such a grand fuss, he so seldom fussed; and it was still more unlike him to be so careless as to lose anything.

"I had quite a fellow-feeling for Sir Charles for once, though I could not help observing that he was more harassed about this MS. than he had been about Charlie's disappearance.

"Sir Charles, as a rule, moved on so different a plane from me, he was so great a person in his way (I have many of his speeches cut out and pasted in a book, and you will see if you look at them what a grand orator he was) that it quite surprised me to find myself sympathising with him.

"We all hunted high and low, in every possible and impossible place; and he came home in the middle of the day to lunch, a thing I had never known him do before, in order to see whether it had turned up.

"Charlie, who had been in bed ever since his escapade, came down, looking rather nervous; but, I suppose, Sir Charles was too full of his loss to think much about anything else,

for he only just glanced at his godson, and said :

“ ‘Hulloa ! young man, a nice fright you’ve been giving Miss Susie, and you cost me ten shillings in cabs. Now, do you candidly think you are worth that, eh?’ and then reverted to the MS.

“ ‘Is it a novel that you have been writing?’ I ventured to inquire. Sir Charles did not look like a man who would write a novel, but one never knows.

“ He started a moment, and then said, ‘I? Oh no! It’s worth anything I ever did, or wrote, or said, a hundred times over, and so people will find out one day. It is the professor’s. Worse luck. He lent it to me to look at. It is his new treatise. It has taken him seven years to work out. I left it on my study table the night before last. I ought to have locked it up. When I came back from Fitz-William Square it was gone; but I felt convinced that I should find it in the morning. Who would be likely to take a fancy to Mowbray’s treatise? It would be caviare to any-

one in the house, except my mother, and she hasn't touched it. It *must* be somewhere in the library, unless the housemaid has lighted the fire with it. If she has, upon my word I don't know what she does not deserve,' he cried wrathfully.

"And though Sir Charles was an easy master, as a rule, it did occur to me that I wouldn't be in Jane's shoes for a good deal, if she were the culprit.

"Lady Bargreave raised her finely-marked, black eyebrows, and stared at him in wonder.

"My dear, I have never seen you so excited,' she exclaimed. 'You had better ask Jane yourself about it. But she is fresh from Devonshire, I believe, and very raw. She'll be so frightened that she will probably own to having lighted the fire with bank-notes if you suggest it to her.'

"I wish she had—rather than the other,' said Sir Charles. 'I would lose a thousand pounds more willingly,' and I think he meant it.

"The servants at Eaton Square were on

such a different footing from O'Flanagan and old Biddy at home. There, if my uncle had lost anything (and Uncle Dennis' things were always getting lost more or less) we should all have hunted for it together, and it would have been the most natural thing in the world that he should call Biddy to help, or even that he himself should search for it in the kitchen. I remember his gloves turned up in the stew-pan one day, though I never could understand how they got there! But I don't believe Sir Charles had ever been in the kitchen in his life. When I first came to live in London it seemed to me unnatural that people of one household should know so little of each other; but it is the English way, which, indeed, I never got quite accustomed to.

"‘I shall certainly see and question every servant in the house,’ said Sir Charles; and what a commotion *that* would make in an establishment where the master hardly knew the names of the maids, you must have lived in London to understand.

"Lady Bargreave opened her eyes again,

and then said, 'As you like,' quite quietly. Sir Charles seldom interfered about anything in the house, and the well-oiled machinery generally ran smoothly, but he was master all the same.

"'I think he is making a ridiculous turmoil, and I shall have half the household giving warning after this,' his mother said to me when we went into the drawing-room. But she shrugged her shoulders. '*Que voulez-vous?* It is his house and his money, and I must own that he reminds me of that only fact once in a blue moon.'

"It was the first time that that fact had occurred to me at all. I had, somehow, always thought before that it was Lady Bargreave's house.

"Charlie pulled me inside before I had had time to consider the subject. 'I want to speak to you, Sue,' he said, and drew me into a corner. Charlie didn't like Lady Bargreave, and would never talk before her.

"'What is it?' I asked a little impatiently.

‘You shouldn’t pull me away like that. Is it very important?’

“‘What is a manuscript?’ said Charlie in a tragic whisper.

“He looked so anxious and excited that a dreadful presentiment came over me. ‘Oh, Charlie, you haven’t had anything to do with it, have you?’ I cried. ‘It is a paper with writing on it; surely you haven’t touched it?’

“Sorry as I was for Sir Charles and my friend, the professor, I felt I would much rather that the precious treatise should remain hidden for ever than that Charlie should prove the delinquent.

“Charlie drew a long breath. ‘Is it blue sheets all tied up together with very thick, scrabbly writing on them?’ he said; and when I made a horrified gesture of assent, ‘Oh, Susie; then it wasn’t Jane; it was me; I burn’t them!’

“I sat down in the window-seat with a cry of dismay. I can laugh now when I think of how appalled I was.


“‘I have done it this time!’ said Charlie ruefully. Then, seeing that I still sat speechless, ‘Sooly,’ in a low whisper, ‘he said he would rather have lost a thousand pounds. Do you think—that, perhaps—I may be hung for it?’ And I was too dismayed even to smile.

“‘Well! I don’t care. I can’t let Jane be hung anyhow,’ said Charlie, straightening himself with a little decided jerk. ‘Gentlemen never hide behind petticoats; *he* said that.’

“It was odd, but I had noticed before that, though Charlie rebelled against his guardian, Sir Charles’ remarks always impressed him.

“‘What shall we do?’ I said faintly. ‘Of course he must be told. Shall I tell him for you, Charlie, and say that you are sorry, and that you didn’t know that the papers were valuable?’

“Charlie shook his head. ‘He wouldn’t believe I didn’t know,’ he said. ‘He said I told lies that day before I ran away, and I *didn’t*. It was quite true what I meant, when



the *Times* was turned into a general's hat; it wasn't the *Times* no more than bread is barley; no, wheat, I mean, when it's turned into bread, and I wouldn't,' with unutterable scorn, 'tell lies for *him*.'

"This reminiscence seemed to have brought back both his courage and his defiance. 'I'll tell him myself,' said my small cousin. And he got up with the oddly determined look that sat so quaintly on his small face, and walked to the door. Then he turned round, and looked at me rather piteously, and I jumped up and followed him, and he put a very hot little hand into mine.

"Lady Bargreave looked up from her writing when I passed her. 'My dear Susie, what were you and Charlie whispering about?' she said, though without much interest. 'Did I hear him say that he had destroyed those papers? Well, really, if he were my son, I should whip him!'

"But I don't believe she had ever whipped Ernest in his life.

"We went downstairs silently. When we

got to the library door, Charlie pulled his hand out of mine.

“‘I am going in by myself,’ he announced. ‘But—but you might be in the room, Sooly; not too near, nor as if you had anything to do with it, but so that I can see you. You see,’ wistfully, ‘he is so much bigger than me.’

“‘Very well,’ I said (I generally followed Charlie’s lead, although he was only a child, and I was grown-up). ‘What are you going to say, Charlie?’

“‘I’ll begin by saying that I have come ’cause of Jane, not because I am sorry,’ said Charlie. ‘For he might think I told ’cause I was in a funk to get off.’

“He drew a deep breath; his eyes were very bright, and his face was twitching as it always did when he was nervous and excited. I couldn’t bear to see the child like that, and wished he would let me confess instead; but he wouldn’t.

“‘I am not going to be sorry to a person who thinks I tell lies!’ he said. Then he gave me a little push and I went in.

"Sir Charles was evidently having a last hunt for that missing MS. He was sitting at his *seven-cornered* mahogany table, and turning the contents of the *seven* drawers on to the floor. 'Why, Miss Susie, have you found it?' he asked eagerly and with evident hope, for I did not generally invade his especial sanctum.

"I was rather at a loss to account for my presence, and, with a murmur about wanting to look up something in the encyclopedia, wandered to the book-case.

"Sir Charles must have been surprised, but he got up politely and found the volume I professed to want, and then recommenced his search. I sat down on the library steps with the big book open on my knee at 'Z.'

"I had read mechanically as far as 'Zemindar—a class of officials created under the Mogul government of India, about whose function there has been much controversy,' when I saw Charlie open the door gently, and stand swinging it in his hand, staring with big, solemn eyes at his guardian.

“Sir Charles exclaimed rather impatiently, ‘What do you want? I don’t allow children in here. What do you say? I cannot possibly hear if you talk in a whisper over there. Oh!’ in rather a surprised tone, ‘you wish to speak to me?’

“It certainly was an unprecedented desire on Charlie’s part.

“‘Well, don’t fidget so with the handle. If you have really anything to say, shut the door and come here.’

“Charlie did as he was bid. I think it was the first time that he had ever promptly obeyed his guardian; but his small face had rather a desperate look on it, when he marched up to the table, half-defiant and half frightened, and said rapidly, all in one breath, ‘I am come because you thought it might be Jane, not because I am sorry. It is not Jane at all, it is me.’

“Sir Charles, who had just finished turning out the last drawer, put the contents tidily back, and looked his small godson over from head to foot. ‘So I see,’ he said. ‘You

and Jane are not much of a size' (Jane was a young woman of stalwart proportions). 'What are you not sorry for?'

"'It's about the papers,' murmured Charlie.

"'The *Times*?' said Sir Charles, looking slightly puzzled; and then a light broke on him, and he put his hand on Charlie's shoulder. 'Do you mean to say that you know where that manuscript is?' he cried, his voice changing. 'Out with it! be quick, my man. Do you know?'

"Charlie's lips quivered. I wondered whether I should have had courage to go on. His eyes met Sir Charles' for a moment. Then, 'I burnt it; so it's nowhere now,' he said shortly, and there was an awful silence.

"I had often been irritated by Sir Charles' imperturbability; but perhaps, after all, it was lucky for Charlie at that moment that his guardian was not a man who acted on impulse.

"'You did, did you?' he said at last, in a tone that was a shade lower and quieter than usual. 'And when did you do that?'

“‘When you locked me into the library before I thought of getting out by the window.’

“‘What did you do it for?’

“‘‘Cause I couldn’t reach the gas.’

“‘What had the gas to do with the professor’s manuscript?’

“‘I didn’t know it was the professor’s, I thought it was yours.’

“‘Well, what had the gas to do with my manuscript?’

“No answer. I think Charlie found this judicial examination more alarming than he had expected. Uncle Dennis would have been angry and boxed his ears, and have done with it. Oh, dear! how I pitied the child.

“‘Come,’ said Sir Charles; ‘you are not exactly a pattern boy, but I think you are not a coward. Let’s have the whole truth while you are about it.’

“Charlie lifted his head.

“‘I *do* tell the truth always,’ he said. ‘It was you who wasn’t true when you said I told lies.’

“‘Did I ever say so? Well, that is not to the point now—go on,’ said Sir Charles. ‘Why do you say that you burnt those papers because you couldn’t reach the gas? Think first, and answer me clearly. Don’t be a baby.’

“And Charlie made a valiant effort at self-control.

“‘It got dark,’ he explained at last, ‘and I wanted lights, and I thought Susie would come to let me out; but she didn’t, so I knew you wouldn’t let her. And then I thought I should have to stay locked up always, ’cause you said “till I said I was sorry,” and I wasn’t going to say that; so then I thought it would be dreadful all night, and that I would light the gas, and I couldn’t reach it; so I thought I would light the fire instead, ’cause a fire sounds like somebody talking, and I found your matches, but the coals wouldn’t light. So then I looked for something to light them with, and I saw the papers on your table, and I took them, and stuffed them into your grate, and they made

a beautiful blaze up, but the coals didn't light in the end, I 'spose 'cause I hadn't got any wood—that's all.'

"'No doubt I may be thankful that it did not occur to you to break up my chairs for fire-wood,' said Sir Charles grimly. 'Not that that would have mattered a quarter so much. Certainly, if you wanted to do me a mischief, you've done it!'

"He was silent for a minute. I think he was reminding himself that the child could have had no idea of the amount of harm he was doing. Sir Charles was essentially a just man, though not an easy person to make a confession to.

"'Did you burn that paper out of spite, or simply because you wanted a light and did not think?' he asked; but added: 'Oh, well, never mind that—it's hardly a fair question, perhaps.'

"'I burnt it 'cause I was lonely in the dark,' said Charlie, faltering a little. 'But *rather* 'cause——'

"'Well?'

“‘Rather ’cause I thought it was yours.’

“And again the two pairs of steel-grey eyes met. It was curious, but Charlie *was* like Sir Charles.

“‘H’m,’ said Sir Charles, and his set lips relaxed a little. ‘You certainly are candid. If I ever said that you were not, I apologise. I own you are! As for all your misdeeds—well, you have turned evidence against yourself, and I really don’t know that I should do you any good if——’

“He broke off short. I think that, for once in his life, he was puzzled what to say.

“‘If I had found this out, I would have thrashed you for it, so soon as your arm was well,’ he said at last. ‘Seeing that you’ve confessed on your own account, or rather on Jane’s, I’ll let you off. I shall tell the professor what you have told me. I am very heartily ashamed of myself for having left his property within your reach. I don’t believe in preaching, so I can only hope that, when you are old enough to appreciate the

worth of what you have destroyed, you'll have the grace to regret it. You may go.'

"The boy's face was a study during this speech. I don't think it would have made *me* feel penitent, it was too cold; but I saw his defiance die away when Sir Charles said, 'I am heartily ashamed.' Perhaps Charlie's own pride made him understand how much such words meant to his guardian.

"He hesitated, and then, 'Is that all?' he asked, in an odd, husky, little voice.

"'Oh yes,' said Sir Charles; 'so far as you are concerned, that is all. I shall never say any more about it. Hang it all!' (in some dismay as Charlie still lingered) 'you haven't been doing anything else, have you?'

"'No—o,' said Charlie; and then he looked straight at his guardian. 'What does "pologise" mean?' he said.

"'It's what one gentleman says to another if he has done him wrong or injustice,' said Sir Charles. 'It means that he regrets, and would retract, if he could. It's both the least and the most he can say.'

"Charlie's face flushed; he hesitated a moment longer, and then went away very thoughtfully. He was a child who thought a great deal.

"Sir Charles turned round in his chair and looked at me.

"'Have you satisfied yourself?' he said, and I knew he saw through my transparent subterfuge.

"Sir Charles and Charlie went to Fitz-William Square together that afternoon. I saw them start as I stood at the nursery window with Molly. I was going later to tea with the professor's daughter, and I was quite excited at the prospect, for I had never had any girl friends, and she interested me very much.

"The house, except for its books, looked more poverty-stricken than ever in the daylight. I noticed that the stairs were uncarpeted, and the window curtains threadbare; but there still were roses on the table near Pauline, though yellow roses cost a fortune that month.

“We did not discuss Charlie this time. We talked of the convent at dear Ballymohr, and of the play I had been to, and of London society, and of whether the nuns had not after all the ‘better part.’ But Pauline thought they had not.

“‘Even if it is more trouble,’ she said, ‘it is always better to have lived as fully as possible. One can only live once—here, anyhow.’

“I described to her how good the nuns were, and she listened as if she were listening to a story, asking for all sorts of details about how they dressed, and what they did, and even what they ate.

“As far as bodily luxury went, their lives could hardly have been harder than was hers, and I think the pain she bore so uncomplainingly must have counted as much as any penance; but she admired them to my heart’s content.

“‘Only, you know, I don’t agree with them in the least,’ she said. ‘People who belong to religious sets rub me up till I feel like a cat that’s being stroked the wrong way!’

I shouldn't have patience to stay a day in a convent. I can admire your nuns from a distance, but I shouldn't like one of them to be sitting there where you are. I think they must be as bad as parsons!' cried Pauline. 'And I never can stand a parson for more than ten minutes. It is too great a strain on my politeness.'

"Our priests are not like the Protestant clergy. If you belonged to us, you would never feel like that,' I said wistfully.

"And Pauline's bright eyes filled with laughter.

"Oh, no! of course I shouldn't,' she said. 'But then I shouldn't any longer be myself, or my father's own daughter. One oughtn't to throw stones like a street gamin though!—even at sets. Some people are made to belong to churches, I suppose, and some to stay outside.'

"The pride for her father, and her love for him, which showed so plainly when she spoke of him, delighted me.

"Pauline had many varying character-

istics. She was a little Bohemian in her hatred of conventionality. She was Spartan in her marvellous endurance. She was independent in thought, and withal was sympathetic. There was another side of her which I only discovered later.

“The professor, she told me, had lost all his money suddenly, through his misplaced confidence in a cousin, who (and this struck me as very strange) was still rich. ‘Father can’t bear to talk of it,’ said Pauline. ‘It is a dreadfully sore subject, because he is so ashamed for Cousin Ferdinand.’ Then she added with the gleam of playfulness that flashed out even when she was sad, ‘Father has to do all the being ashamed, you see, for Cousin Ferdinand doesn’t mind a bit.’

“She told me that she had thought she was going to be an artist, and had worked very hard before the accident which had crippled her put an end to her ambition.

“She showed me one of her pictures. It belonged to her father, who would not part with it, because it was the last she ever

painted. I am no judge of pictures, and could not tell whether it was good or bad; but I know that it was the kind that remains always in one's memory.

"There was a little grey church on a bare hill where all the breezes blew. The look of wind was in the picture, for the gnarled old tree in the churchyard was bent to one side, and so were the gravestones which were worn and battered. You could just catch a glimpse of the sea behind the church, and the clouds were coming up sullen and heavy. There was one streak of yellow on the horizon, and a glint of white in the foreground, the white wings of sea-gulls flying low over the sailors' graves. I felt sure they were sailors who were buried there.

"The church door was shut, but light was streaming through the low pointed window on the west end, a greenish light such as comes subdued and soft through the thick, old-fashioned, green glass that is set in lozenge-shaped panes.

"A figure—was it a man?—was straining

up to the window, his hands resting on the broad ledge, his head thrown back in an attitude of eager listening. His long grey hair floated in the wind, and his dark garments were blown round him, and, clinging to his knees, with bare white arms and neck, clinging and shivering, was a baby girl. Was it an elf or a child? She made me shiver too!

“‘I don’t like it—it is too sad!’ I said. ‘It means loneliness and cold and shutting out; no, I don’t like it. I couldn’t bear to have it in my room, if it were mine.’

“And Pauline, who was watching me, looked pleased. ‘Yes, that is what it means,’ she said.

““From the church came a murmur of folks at their prayers,
But we stood without in the cold blowing airs.”’

“‘It is the merman and the little mermaid with the cold, strange eyes. They stand outside calling, “Margaret, Margaret!” but she will never come back to them any more. I have seen that little church; we

went there together. Father sent the sketch up to the Academy, and they accepted it; but I knew, when I got their acceptance, that I should never paint pictures again.'

"'Oh, isn't it possible you may yet? Surely you can't be certain!' I cried, for indeed it seemed to me so wrong and unnatural that all that power should be wasted. Pauline was so—how shall I express it?—so alive, so full of perception, and ideas and interests, that seemed crying out to be translated into action.

"'Oh, well, of course, one doesn't know,' she said. 'I don't think there will be canvas and paints in the next world, any more than I think there will be gold and catgut for the harpers; but perhaps my scrap of talent will find its vent somehow. After all, paint-brushes and paints *are* clumsy mediums, though they are the best I've found. Father prefers pen and paper. Luckily, I can help him there, for one can write on one's back, though one can't draw. Sir Charles' tongue is his medium,' added Pauline with a smile.

But I wasn't inclined to talk about Sir Charles.

"‘I wasn't thinking of the next world,’ I said, a little embarrassed. ‘I meant that, perhaps, some doctor might do you good here. Have you seen——’

"‘Dozens of them!’ said Pauline. ‘I might be seeing them still in the work-house, if I hadn't struck. But don't look so sorry for me. Do you know I really would rather be myself than anyone else, even putting aside my vague hope of painting superhumanly beautiful pictures without any paints, when I'm out of the flesh! *Please* don't be sad.’

"It was very strange (for Pauline's views sometimes shocked me), but she always seemed to be living face to face with realities, and to be less afraid of them than most people are. She never, I think, divided things into sacred and profane, or saw why she should speak of the next world in a solemn whisper, when she talked of this one out loud.

"I call her ‘Pauline,’ for we saw a good deal of each other, and learned to call each

other by our Christian names. I liked going to Fitz-William Square, and grew fond of her, though she was so much cleverer than I, that I never felt that I understood her well enough to count myself her friend. Besides, her whole heart was given to her father and one other; and, charming as she always was, she had no real need of anyone else. She was very unhappy about the burnt manuscript; she said it was as if a bit of her father's life had been destroyed. She was too generous to bear Charles any grudge; but the only time I ever saw her cry was once when she was talking about that mishap. I never could quite understand why it signified so much. After all, a book is only a book, and this one wasn't even printed! If it had been a child, she and Sir Charles could not have mingled more.

"Do you know how the back of one's neck aches, when one has been looking up at pictures in a gallery? I sometimes felt as if I had a chronic mental crick of the same kind with trying to understand the different point of view from which the people I was with saw

things; and, indeed, it is small wonder that other people's ways are puzzling, when one's own self takes to giving one surprises. *Myself* often surprised me about that time. I used to find my sympathies running quite in an opposite direction to that in which I expected them to flow.

"Lady Bargreave did not come down to dinner that night. The theatre had given her a headache. Sir Charles and I dined together.

"I should once have been shy at finding myself *tête-à-tête* with him, but he did not alarm me that evening. I told him all about my visit to Pauline, and his evident interest pleased me. His face had the softened look on it that I always associated with visits to the professor. He was evidently *very* fond of the professor. I tried to sympathise with his self-reproachful dismay over his friend's loss. Self-reproach sat oddly on Sir Charles.

"'Poor Mowbray!' he said. 'To think that my idiotic carelessness and that hop-o'-my-thumb's naughtiness have destroyed what "all

the king's horses and all the king's men " can't replace! Little rascal! I wish that his enmity had taken any other form, and that he had burned anything else in the world rather 'cause it was mine. I must say I respected the frankness of that avowal. At least, you've taught him to speak the truth!'

" 'No—that wasn't my teaching; that comes naturally to Charlie. He is so very truthful,' I said eagerly; but I was pleased. 'He has so many good qualities——' I was beginning, when the door opened and Charlie himself, who was supposed to have gone to bed early, walked in. He had evidently re-dressed himself hurriedly, for his boots were on the wrong feet, and his curly hair was tumbled, and his jacket buttoned wrong all the way up.

" 'Why, Charlie, I thought you were safely asleep!' I cried, and Sir Charles looked at him through his eye-glass, and said :

" 'My dear fellow, why have you got your left boot on your right foot, and your right boot on your left foot?'

" Charlie paid no attention to either of our

remarks, but walked straight up to his guardian with the decision that always characterised him.

“‘I’ve been thinkin’ about it, and I’ve come to say I “’pologise,”’ he said; ‘’cause it’s what one gentleman says to the other if he has been wrong.’

“Sir Charles looked down at the small figure on the hearth-rug with a twinkle in his eyes, but without the ghost of a smile on his lips.

“‘Right!’ he said; ‘there is nothing for the other to do but to accept the apology, of course. With all my heart, Charlie,’ and he held out his hand. ‘Suppose we start fresh and be friends, eh?’

“It was highly characteristic of Charlie that, though I am sure he was genuinely sorry, he hesitated and considered before he accepted the advance.

“‘Do you think a fellow should be friends with a guardian?’ he asked doubtfully.

“‘I think it *might* be possible, without any loss of the fellow’s self-respect. At any

rate, we may as well give the plan a trial and see how it works,' said Sir Charles, and they shook hands warmly.

"And then, whether it was the kindly touch, or that he was surprised at being met half-way. I don't know—Charlie was a very unaccountable child—but he suddenly began to cry.

"‘I am awfully sorry—I wish I hadn't done it,’ he sobbed, and pulling his hand away, fled hastily.

"I did not dare to follow him, for Charlie hated to be seen in tears; besides, Sir Charles signed to me not to.

"‘That little chap takes things too hardly,’ he said; ‘but he has got the makings of a man in him.’

"‘You'll have no more trouble with him,’ I said. And, of course, I was glad that so it should be. Only I knew quite well, and the knowledge pricked me sharply, that, now that Charlie had made friends with his guardian, I wasn't needed any more.

"Sir Charles looked inquiringly at me

across the table. His shrewd, grey eyes could be very kindly, and his mood was unusually gentle.

“‘Miss Susie, I give you credit for being too sweet-natured to be sorry that Charlie has come round to me, in spite of my “want of understanding in the matter of children,”’ he said; ‘but your voice sounds rather sad. Are you grudging me a triumph—just a little bit, eh?’

“But I did not grudge it him. No, not even a little bit, and not even though I knew that he had felt certain all along that his way would prove the right way, and though, just at first, his certainty used to irritate me.

“‘I wonder why some people always get what they mean to get?’ I said.

“‘Because some people know what that is,’ he answered, smiling; ‘but the majority “want” vaguely. Shall I tell you a secret of success, Miss Susie? Don’t waste power unless you know exactly what you are pushing for, and, when you are quite clear that it’s worth while, *push hard*. Charlie knows his

own mind, too, though he is much too sensitive, and ought to grow another skin.'

"‘I don't want Charlie to turn out hard and pushing!’ I cried. ‘Do you think that it is good for people to get all they try for?’

"‘You don't expect me to give a moral lecture on the demoralising effects of worldly ambition, do you?’ said Sir Charles.

"And then suddenly my tongue was loosened, and a thought that had often been in my heart found words, very much to my own surprise, and, I think, to his.

"‘I asked you that because it is you who have much the strongest influence over Charlie,’ I said. ‘Oh, I know that he began by hating you, and that he is fond of me. All the same, it is you that he will take example by, and already it is your words that weigh with him. I’ve seen that for weeks though I’ve never *thought* about it before. I love Charlie best, of course, because I am a girl, and because I’ve taken care of him; but my opinions count for just nothing beside yours, and it will be so more and more. I don’t

quite understand why that is, but I am sure it is true, and I don't mind,' I cried, 'if you help to make a good man of him. Do you want him to be that, or only—successful? You'll be thinking this very impertinent of me, and presently I shall wish I hadn't talked so much; but, you see, their mother left the children to me, before Uncle Dennis left them to you, and I do care so very much!'

"When I thought about our conversation afterwards, I wondered at my own courage, but Sir Charles did not laugh at all, and what he said was not in the least what I had expected.

"'You've the strongest possible right to ask what my views about the children are,' he said. 'Why, you've always been co-guardian; and it was because you "care so very much" that I pressed you to stay here. Charlie owes you more than he'll know till he is a man. I should fancy that it must decidedly be an advantage to have had a woman to pet one in childhood, especially if there's an antidote at hand, eh? Well! I certainly hope my

ward will be successful in whatever line he chooses. Success generally implies brains and energy. I hope also that he'll be as honourable a man as his father was, with more will and more ambition. You don't altogether approve my sentiments, so I'll add for your comfort that, if I had to choose between the two, I'd rather see him without the success than without the honour. You believe that I hope?'

"'Yes! oh, yes,' I said, and I was glad from my heart. One rejoices so to find that people are better than one had at first imagined, though, indeed, of late, I had begun to trust Sir Charles greatly.

"'That answers your last question,' he said. 'As to the other, I am sorry to say I have never been in a position to solve it. When I get all that I wish for, I promise you I'll tell you whether or not my luck agrees with me.' He laughed, but rather sadly. 'I should be very willing to run the risk of being demoralised. But it's a safe promise. I don't think that your curiosity will be gratified on that count.'

“‘I’m sorry for that then,’ I said, ‘for one likes one’s friends to get what they want.’

“‘Have I made *two* friends this evening? Come! Charlie’s done me a good turn. I believe if I had whipped him, you would have murdered me; wouldn’t you, Miss Susie?’

“‘*Of course* I would!’ I cried. ‘And I shouldn’t have been at all ashamed of it either.’ But I was pleased, too, that we had made up any differences. Now I would depart in peace, I thought.

“I went to bed that night with the full intention of writing to the mother superior the very next morning, and of suggesting to Lady Bargreave that it was time I brought my long visit to a close. I was very loth to go, but I meant to act with a decision worthy of my host himself. The worst of it is that, whenever *I* try to be firm, something always happens to prevent me from carrying out my intention.

“How could I start for Ireland when Molly sickened with the measles? Of course, Molly did not matter so much as Charlie, for she was

a healthy child, and measles is not, as a rule, a dangerous complaint at four years old. Still, I could not leave just when she was ill; and, when she began to get better, Charlie caught the infection, and was very ill indeed. I have always thought that the poor little fellow was in real danger, though everybody else declared that I was overanxious; anyhow, he was very weak after the attack was over, and he had to be carried up and downstairs like a baby for quite a long time. Week after week went by, and he seemed to stick at the same stage, and the days got warmer and longer, and the big nursery at the top of the house felt hot.

“Charlie’s godfather was wonderfully good to him when he was ill, and brought him shoals of presents—a new one every day; and Lady Bargreave was very kind to me whenever I came into the drawing-room, though she never went near the children, and confided in me no more. Sometimes I felt as if I had dreamed all about ‘Ernest,’ and that this easy, pretty life could not possibly have any other side. It was as though a gaily-painted curtain

had been lifted just for a little while and then dropped; but the glimpse I had had behind it saddened me. Perhaps that was why I used to wake up feeling as if some trouble had its hands on my heart. I remember that I would try to reason myself back into cheerfulness, as one reasons with a silly child who sees vague horrors in the dark.

“It was Sir Charles who noticed that I was out of spirits. I had been so constantly in the nursery that I had seen very little of him for the last three weeks. He remarked suddenly that ‘Susie’ looked as if she needed country air and champagne! I was reading aloud to Lady Bargreave, Charlie having gone to sleep, and Sir Charles’ words made me jump, and set my heart beating funnily. I had been thinking all the time I was reading that, now Charlie was out of danger, I ought to go.

“‘Why, the child looks as if you were suggesting hanging and quartering by way of a prescription,’ said Lady Bargreave. ‘What is the matter, Susie? Charles is right; you’ve

grown quite thin lately, and have left off laughing.'

"‘I was thinking of propounding an idea to you,’ said Sir Charles; ‘but you must do just as you like about it, Susie.’

"He had let the ‘Miss’ slip of late on the strength of our cousinship, he said (it was a very distant one), and had taken to treating me with an elder-brotherly kindness, which, I think, rose partly from the perception of how very poor in relatives I was.

"‘You are worrying yourself to death about that troublesome little brat,’ he went on. ‘What do you say to carrying him off to the sea for a time? I believe a blow of salt air is all he wants now. You shall spoil him to your heart’s content, and of course I will provide lodgings.’

"I think he expected me to be overjoyed at the prospect of having undivided possession of my favourite child once more; and so I ought to have been; only, somehow, I suppose I did not look pleased, for he added quickly:

"‘Don’t say yes if you would rather not;

we put quite enough on your shoulders I am sure. I fancied that you would enjoy it. There is a quaint, old-fashioned house by the sea near L——t that Mowbray was wishing to rent for a month. It is rather large for him. I thought that you and the children and Kate might take half the house, and he and his daughter the rest. You would have your own rooms, of course, and you need see no more of the Mowbrays than you choose. It would be rather dull, even for such a child-lover as you, with only the children, would not it? But you like the professor, and—he hesitated a moment—‘and his daughter.’

“‘It is very kind of you to think of all that,’ I said.

“After all, I reflected, seeing that I must bring my visit to an end one day, this would be a good break. ‘I should not have to say good-bye to everyone at once. Why wasn’t I more pleased? I pinched myself surreptitiously.

“‘Of course the place is primitive to the last degree,’ resumed Sir Charles; ‘but I am

fond of it myself, and so is—the professor. If you go there I shall try to run down to the inn and look you up for a day or two, just to see that you are not ruining my godson between you. But *do* you approve the idea or not?’

“‘Yes. Oh, I do!’ I cried.

“And Lady Bargreave said, ‘You have brought Susie’s colour back.’

“‘I am always quite well,’ I said happily. ‘But I think it is a beautiful plan, and I don’t know why I wasn’t pleased at first. I am just longing for it now.’

“I think that the most exquisite times in most people’s lives are those when they are (perhaps unconsciously) expecting something. There is certainly a strong element of expectancy in the happiness of boyhood and girlhood, vague, shy expectancy, waiting for it does not quite know what; and when that goes, and we begin only to look forward to the defined and probable, then our youth is passing away. There is a picture in my room that was given me by the professor, and that was

painted by Pauline Mowbray. It is the picture of a girl wandering through a garden at day-break. The trees and flowers are wet and misty, and the girl's face is uplifted with a curious dreamy smile on it, and she is listening to an angel in grey and blue drapery, who is bending his head to hers. The tall lilies are stooping to kiss the hem of her dress, and the birds are fluttering against her as she goes by, and her eyes are brimming over with joy.

"That picture always reminds me of my first week at L——t, not that the painted garden was like the wee strip that we sat in, or that the girl was like me (I was never tall and slender and beautiful), but only because I, too, was so very happy there.

"L——t is just a fishing village, and it stands under a hill on the edge of a beach. The black huts are tarred, and the village smells of fish and ropes and sea-weed. There is a sandy road that leads from the street to a quarry, and then narrows into a path, and meanders up the hill to the church. I could

not think at first why that church was familiar to me. Before you get to the quarry, you come to a low stone house with a deep porch. There is a wooden bench outside the house, and a long border full of flowers. A fence and a kissing-gate divide the little bit of garden from the road. Once the place was used for French prisoners of war. Long ago they sat on the wooden bench and wearied, no doubt, of the white road and peep of sea. It is called 'The Hospital,' and it belongs to a gentleman who owns half the county, but has never set eyes on this queer little corner of his dominions.

"It was here that Molly and Charlie and I came one sweet morning, when the smell of wall-flowers and sea combined, and the mellow light, and the cawing of rooks, and wash of the waves at the bottom of the hill, all welcomed us at once.

"It was so beautiful and fresh and sweet! I think it is only the country-lovers who have lived in a town who know how much they love the country; for, before I went to London, I

just took the peace and beauty of tree and grass as a child takes its mother's milk, without thinking about it.

"Tea was laid in the oak-panelled parlour. Home-made bread and butter, and tiny brown eggs, and in the middle of the table a great jug full of yellow and brown wall-flowers. I knew that it was Pauline who had thought of them. We pushed the table up to the window, so as to be able to look out all the time we were eating, and we had a very cosy meal, all alone together again.

"Charlie was very quiet, though he kept smiling to himself, and Molly's eyelids drooped, though she refused to go to bed early, because she was enjoying herself so much. She fell asleep after tea, curled up like a kitten, in the big arm-chair that she insisted on sitting in; and Charlie and I sat on the window-sill and watched the red cows go by down the road.

" 'Dad would like this house,' said Charlie with a sigh. 'Sooly, do you think he has got a garden in heaven? I suppose it's a garden

without any weeds, if he has, for dad never did like weeding.'

"It was almost the first time that Charlie had talked of his father since we left Ballymohr, though I knew he thought about him and missed him a great deal; and I was glad, though I could only shake my head over the question.

"‘Sir Charles says dad was awfully good at football, and he hopes I will be the same; but *he* likes cricket best. He says dad was the sort who never run away from anything big, nor bully anything small, and that that is the best sort. He said one shouldn't ever be afraid of anything, but, if one *is*, one must shut one's teeth hard and go on just the same as if one wasn't. I did try to do that when I told him about the papers.'

"‘Why, Charlie,' I cried, surprised, ‘I didn't know you had ever talked so much to Sir Charles.'

"‘It was when we were coming home from the professor's,' said Charlie. ‘Oh, Sue, he did mind so about that paper; he got

quite red when he told the professor, and he said it was all his carelessness, and he wouldn't ever forgive himself; but that I didn't understand what the papers were (that was why I was sorry), and he talked a lot, when we were walking back, about Eton, and about the long jump that dad took when he was young (I think I should like to go to Eton), and he said, of course, nobody else could be like dad, and that he knew that as well as I did; so I needn't be jealous for dad any more, nor think that anyone was taking his place. Sue, when I am a man, I am going to stand for Parliament; but I'll be on the other side, 'cause it would be such fun to make a speech 'gainst Sir Charles, wouldn't it? But dad will never read *mine* in the *Times*. Sooly, do you remember?' .

"‘Yes, indeed!’ I said, ‘but I thought that you and Sir Charles had made friends; why do you want to be on the other side?’

"‘It would be more fun,’ repeated my small cousin, in whom the combative instinct certainly was strong; ‘and he would make

such a nice enemy! Sue, I b'lieve I like Sir Charles! Do you?'

"Do you know the very bright look that everything has when the sun shines, but there is rain coming? That clear brightness was on everything during the first week we were at L——t, and the children and I felt 'fey' with the pleasure and novelty of our new abode. We used to go down to the sea in the morning, through the fishermen's village, where the women stood at the doors knitting, and where Molly and I made friends with them all.

"It was pleasure just to be back in a place where people behaved like Christians again, and gave one good-morning and good-evening, and didn't look surprised (as they do in London) if one stayed to chat as one passed. There was one woman there who could knit a pair of socks a day, and she was never still, but moved her needles without thinking of them. The sea came over the road and flooded her ground rooms in the high

spring-tide, but she didn't seem to mind much.

"In the warm afternoons we would sit on the French prisoners' bench, where French names were carved, or wander a little up the road, but not far, for Molly's legs were short. In the evening I would go round to the other side of the house and knock at the other sitting-room door.

"I was shy of intruding on Pauline and the professor at first (though Charlie would often run in to see them, Pauline being fond of him), but they pressed me to come, and somehow I began to feel as if my visit to them were the natural ending to the day. It is odd how people make their own atmosphere; there were we all under one roof, and yet, when I crossed the hall and went into their room, I felt as if I had got into another kind of life; but I liked it more and more.

"Sir Charles was right. The children were no longer quite everything to me, and I should have been less keenly happy, perhaps, if I hadn't had that bit of grown-up society,

that change from looking down, mentally, to looking up, at the close of the day.

“Both father and daughter always welcomed me kindly; but the professor’s face looked sadder than it used to look, and Pauline’s more transparent. She was weaker, too, though generally in such high spirits that it was hard to realize it. She would often make me laugh half the evening, and she got amusement out of everything. She was a wonderful mimic, and could take us all off to the life, from Charlie to the fisherwoman who went past the window, and whose accent she caught to the echo. Her fun had no sting in it, as a rule, but I was occasionally startled by the appropriateness of the words she would put into our mouths.

“The girl was almost uncannily quick at divining other people’s thoughts. I used to tell her that if she had lived in another age she would have been burned for witchcraft.

“There were, I fancy, rather dangerous possibilities in Pauline’s nature, but something had kept it sweet. She was never

ill-natured, and one caught glimpses both of genius and of a wide and deep capability for sympathy.

“Once I found her with a bit of charcoal and a sheet of paper in her hand; there was a half-sketched figure on the paper, but the lines were shaky, and she tore it in two when I looked at it, and flung it away impatiently.

“‘It is no good; I can’t draw on my back,’ she said. ‘It was silly of me to attempt to. There is no use in kicking against the pricks, is there, Susie? It only tries one’s temper; but it is so odd to feel the want to express something, and then not to be able to. I am like the people who want to stretch their toes when their feet have been cut off.’

“I picked up the bit of paper and put it together. I have it still.

“‘Tell us the story of it,’ said Charlie, who had an insatiable appetite for Pauline’s romances, and would persuade her to spin them for him by the hour.

“‘No,’ she said, ‘I am tired of wagging my tongue *instead*. It’s a feeble substitute for a pencil. It does not really do so well.’ But, on seeing the child look disappointed, she, after all, did his bidding, and invented a very merry tale, with not a sigh in it.

“It had only just dawned on me that this brave little genius suffered a great deal from the forced suppression of her gift.

“When Charlie had gone to bed, I could not refrain from telling her how much I respected her high spirits and pluck, but Pauline shook her head. ‘It might have been so much worse,’ she said. ‘I really am very lucky. Once upon a time, I did care about that—my scrap of talent I mean—more than anything else in the world, except perhaps father. If I had lost the power to draw then, I think the loss would have broken my heart. It doesn’t now.’

“A wonderful, soft light came into Pauline’s eyes. ‘I am not at all to be pitied,’ she said; ‘on the contrary.’

“‘What do you mean?’ I asked. ‘I don’t

understand,' and Pauline's face brightened into laughter.

"'Oh, Susie dear!' she cried, 'and you are generally so quick. Don't you *know*?'"

"But I didn't. Afterwards I couldn't think how I could have been so stupid, when it was all so plain.

"Sir Charles came on Saturday, as he had promised. We decorated the room with wild flowers in his honour. . . . I can see now the amused expression that came into his face, when Charlie and Molly and I ran out to welcome him, with a warmth that was not untinged with compunction. He pretended to have been afraid that Charlie and I would have heaved bricks at him because of his intrusion on our holiday; but I think that he was pleased.

"He looked tired and rather worn, but then the clear, bright atmosphere revealed the lines in his forehead unmercifully. In London I hardly ever saw him by daylight. He did not sleep at the inn after all; the professor had found a corner for him in the other

half of the house, he said, and I was glad of that; for, considering that Sir Charles paid our rent, it did seem ridiculous to me that he should take a room out when he came to see us. He had lunch with *us*, and Charlie and Molly were patterns of goodness, especially Charlie, who vindicated the truth of what I had always asserted and proved that he could be the nicest child in the world, when he chose. He had quaint, old-fashioned little manners, that had always before vanished if his godfather were present; he waited on Sir Charles very prettily, and was quite eagerly polite. I couldn't refrain from commenting on that fact after lunch, when Sir Charles, with a remark about 'little pitchers with long ears,' had sent the children out of the room.

"'You see how good Charlie can be,' I said.

"'H'm—yes, and I see how badly he wants school,' said Sir Charles, which I thought perverse, though I wasn't so indignant as I should once have been.

"'He is much more interesting than most

schoolboys are; he thinks and feels so much more,' I said, and Sir Charles nodded.

"‘Exactly,’ he said. ‘He does both a great deal too much; he wants throwing back a bit. The ordinary school-boy doesn’t think, and is much healthier. Look here, Susie, the child couldn’t bear me at first partly because he is such an uncommonly loyal little chap, and was sore at seeing me take his father’s authority, and partly, no doubt, because I am *not* fond of children, though I mean to do my best for these two. Now, I wasn’t going to separate him from you, and pack him off to find his own level while he was in that state of mind; I meant him to come round first, and to recognise that I am not animated by sheer cruelty in my dealings with my wards. He quite grasps that now, and, whether he likes it or not, he won’t resent what I do. I mean to send him to Hawtrey’s, preparatory to Eton. I hardly dare hope that you will forgive me, eh, Susie? And I know it must be hard on you.’

“I tried to smile, but couldn’t, though, of

course, I knew that Charlie and I must part soon anyhow; and I was less afraid of a public school for him than I used to be, because I had a growing confidence in his guardian's judgment.

"‘I daresay you know best,’ I said, seeing that I was expected to say something; ‘only, what would you have done if Charlie had never come round? You say you don’t profess to understand children, but you seem to have been pretty sure that he would do justice to your good intentions in the end.’

"‘There is a substratum of common sense about that young man, under all his obstinacy, which he has, doubtless, inherited from his godfather,’ said Sir Charles. ‘I counted on that.’

"And I could not help laughing.

"‘I know! Charlie *is* dreadfully like you,’ I said, ‘except that—’ I was going to say, ‘Except that he takes things so much more to heart,’ but I didn’t say it; something stopped me. I was not so sure of that exception after all. What had brought such deep lines on

that very successful man's face? I wondered. Did they all mean hard work?

"Are you going to send Charlie to school immediately?' I asked.

"Not till the autumn. He must get stronger before then. I thought it best to consult my co-guardian to-day.'

"The autumn! Oh, I am glad that's a long way off yet,' I cried; and then I laughed at the feeble pretence at consultation.

"It's an excellent way that you have of consulting,' I said. 'You do it out of politeness when your mind is quite made up, and it's small chance anyone has then of altering it.'

"But I didn't really feel sore any longer. Since Charlie was bound to have a guardian, it was better that he should have one with a will of his own. I never could like a man who hadn't that, and it's true that a decided person is a great saving of trouble; one knows just where to have him.

"You are looking so thoughtful; are you very angry with me?' asked Sir Charles.

"I answered, 'No, I wasn't.' Only I was wondering why I wasn't.

"We all went out together after that, and Sir Charles gave the children extravagant tips, which they spent at once in the village. He was very nice to us all, and he asked a great deal about my plans, and very kindly and earnestly begged me to remember that he was my near relation, though he wasn't my guardian ('second cousin twice removed,' I put in), and that if I ever wanted a man to stand by me, he would be ready and proud to do it.

"'You are not *very* old to be going off all by yourself, Susie,' he said. 'Promise me you won't forget that you have an available cousin, if you should happen to need one at any time.'

"I was pleased and touched, and promised readily enough. I have never claimed Sir Charles' help, and never shall, but I am very sure that, if I had, it would have been forthcoming. It was a delightful walk. Molly got tired on the way home, and Sir Charles carried her. He always swore that he did not like children, but he had certainly a soft cor-

ner for Molly. I don't think he felt it in the least incumbent on him to preserve discipline where she was concerned. A boy was a different matter, but he spoiled his girl ward more than I did, as I often triumphantly assured him. He was, generally, a better talker than a listener, and I had sometimes thought him fatiguingly brilliant, but that day he was unusually silent, and I felt as if the silences were a sign of a real friendliness. It was seldom that one saw beyond the society surface with him, but I fancied he was different there in the country. Perhaps it was the professor's influence that made the difference.

"It rained on our way back, and the sun set in a bank of clouds, and the soft west wind blew the drops into our faces.

"There had been a charm about the whole day, but I never saw anything quite so beautiful as that evening. There was a rainbow over the sea, and the men were unlading their nets on the beach; they had had a good haul, and the meshes were broken in some places with the weight of the fish. The live purple

and silver and green lay struggling on the yellow stones, and the men's blue jerseys glittered with tiny bits of scales.

"'Look what wealth!' I cried. 'I wish Pauline could see that.' And Sir Charles turned away with a quick, impatient sigh.

"'Had not we better hurry? the clouds are coming up against the wind,' he said.

"He was right; the rain came down in good earnest just when we got home; we had seen the last of the sun for some days.

"I ran in to talk to Pauline as usual that evening, after the children were in bed. She was flushed, and, I think, in some pain, though she would not own it. She had a bunch of flowers fastened in her belt. I wondered sometimes how Pauline could afford so many roses, when she was so poor.

"I was just telling her about our walk, when Sir Charles came in. He was in evening dress, but he still looked different from the Sir Charles I knew in London.

"His eyes went straight to Pauline, as if she were the only person in the room, and

hers, that seemed larger and brighter than ever, smiled at the sight of him. He walked across to her sofa and sat down by it, as if he were taking his natural place.

"Then he spoke to me, some casual remark, some hope that I had not got wet, or been too tired with our walk.

"I do not know what I replied, I was so taken by surprise, for at last I *saw*.

"No amount of love-making, nothing he could have said, could have made things so plain to me as his air of calm possession. Pauline was *his*, and he was hers; there was no need of words there!

"Pauline gave a sudden little scream. 'I've upset the ink!' she cried. 'What is to be done, Susie?'

"She was not generally clumsy, and I could not think how the accident had occurred, but I was rather glad of the distraction. I sopped up the black stream with the professor's blotting-paper, and we laughed over the mishap, and then I went out of the room, leaving them together.

"I saw Sir Charles slip his arm under her cushion, so as to support her more comfortably, and I noticed the restful look on her face when she turned to him, and the tenderness in his.

"I did not know that Sir Charles' sarcastic lips *could* look so. It was wonderful, and passing strange. I put my shawl over my head and ran outside, and stood in the porch. I longed to go away over the misty hills—away, away to the land where the morning's sun had gone.

"I don't know how long I stood there; I think it must have been quite a long time. I don't know how long the professor had been talking to me without my having heard a word; I think he must have made several remarks, for he seemed quite concerned when I turned round.

"'My dear child, are you ill?' he said. And he wouldn't have called me 'dear child' if he had not been rather startled, for he was punctilious as a rule.

"I tried to laugh, and to say that I had

never felt better ; but my lips were stiff, and my voice sounded like somebody else's, not like my own a bit.

"He pretended to be quite satisfied. The professor would not intrude, even his sympathy, but I felt his kindness ; it was in the tones of his voice, and in his furrowed, old face, and all of a sudden an impulse carried me right out of myself. Some people are *born* confessors, I think, to whom others turn instinctively in their need.

" 'It wasn't true that nothing is the matter—I am very unhappy,' I said. 'Don't say "why?" please, or ever tell anyone.'

" 'I won't,' said the professor. 'The "why" is probably beyond us both.' He laid his old hand on my shoulder. 'There are some riddles that we puzzle out,' he said ; 'some few. Of the greater number, God only knows the answer.'

" 'Charlie is going to school,' I said, 'and I must go away too. One can't stay with people for ever, however kind they are. Lady Bargreave has been very kind to me,' I added

apologetically (for, indeed, I was ashamed of that impulse already). 'And so have you and Pauline, and everyone, and I never can help getting fond of the people I am with. It's—it's quite natural to hate going away, isn't it?—and to feel rather lonely?'

"'Quite,' said the professor.

"'I think I have been behaving like a silly idiot,' I said, drying my eyes. 'I had felt that I must cry out, but now I was better.'

"'H'm,' said the professor. 'When you get to seventy, my dear young lady, you won't be in such a hurry to call anyone, even yourself, hard names. But, in the meantime, I don't think you will be lonely long. It is the self-centred people who are that, not the Miss Susies. The richer the gift, the richer the giver. No one was ever the worse for giving.'

"'Do you really think that?' I said.

"'I *know* it,' said the professor.

"The professor was so good. It wasn't what he said, it was just he himself that helped one. I went back to the parlour with him, for I did not want Pauline or Sir Charles to

think anything was the matter. We played chess all the evening, and the professor must have played very badly, for I won, and that night I wrote to the mother at the convent. I went out to post the letter when I had finished it. The night was still, though the rain was still falling softly. When I put the letter into the post-box, I felt that I had turned a sharp corner. Human companionship counts for very much in life, but I think there is no doubt that the *sharpest* corners must always be turned alone. So it is now; so it will be when the great change comes, and we must e'en let go the warm fingers that cling to ours. Like children stumbling in the dark, we stretch out our hands into the unknown, but not in vain, no, not in vain.

“Pauline told me the whole story the next day. It gave me a kind of sharp and rather painful satisfaction, for it proved something that I had begun to believe. I think that a person with a large capacity for affection attracts other people like a magnet. He may

have many faults; he may be ashamed of expressions of feeling, and may take refuge in an affectation of hardness and flippancy; but the power which is 'the strongest thing in the world' makes itself felt through our deepest instincts. I was glad that my instincts were right. It was in the evening, and it was getting dusk when Pauline told me. I sat on a low stool by her side, and leaned my head back on a corner of her sofa, and watched the golden sky fade into dun, and the first pale star pierce through. The glory of sunset has been associated in my mind ever since with Pauline's love, which indeed was pure as those fiery clouds, as a great love must be. After all these years I am thankful to Pauline. It is no small thing after all, and it is worth a heart-ache to have had a glimpse of the 'Vision Beautiful.' It purges one's eyes, and one believes more in the eternal element in this world of ours, which was made in the beginning 'very good.'

"Pauline first met Sir Charles when she was only seventeen and he was twenty-seven,

and that was ten long years ago. He was not a Q. C., but was just beginning to be noticed as a rising man. He was very ambitious, and immensely energetic. He had been attracted to the professor by some book the latter had written; as a younger man he had taken a keen interest in many subjects, though, as he grew older, his powers became more concentrated. He had more enthusiasm to spare in those days, and Pauline said that he was more restless and less self-possessed. Mr. Ernest used to come too, though never with his brother, for they hated each other even then, and Ernest was always his mother's darling, and the elder son and Lady Bargreave didn't 'get on.'

"'Of course, father and I were not at all in Lady Bargreave's set,' Pauline explained. 'She had never even heard of me. I used to feel angry with her sons sometimes, and to wonder whether they came to see us just out of curiosity, because father and I lived so differently that it amused them. I often wished that father wouldn't be so hospitable,

and ready to ask anyone who called to stay to supper; but I was ashamed to tell him so, because, you know, he is so simple and good, he never imputes ungenerous motives to anyone. Mr. Bargreave was a weak, spoilt boy then, with a remarkably handsome face and a very beautiful voice.

“‘I persuaded him to sit to me for his portrait. Models were so dear, and, when I kept him amused, he rather liked being looked at.

“‘Mr. Bargreave had always a standing grudge against Sir Charles. I listened to all his complaints while I was drawing, and tried to coax him into a better temper. His mouth fell into such heavy, sullen lines when he was angry that his beauty was quite lost. I used to make jokes just in order to make him smile. I might have been as merry as I liked with his brother with perfect safety; but Mr. Bargreave did not understand.’

“Pauline’s lips curved disdainfully while she spoke.

“‘He acted after his nature, I suppose,’ she

said; 'and I did not understand him any more than he had understood me at first. He thought that, because I laughed with him, he might say anything to me. Susie! I had fancied that I was very able to take care of myself and very independent, but I think I was really very ignorant. Well—I discovered my mistake one day; that I made him see *his* too was small comfort, for I had been greatly shocked, as well as frightened.

"When he was gone I sat down on the studio floor and hid my face in the lay figure's draperies and cried. No man had ever been rude to me before, and, if father had been in, he wouldn't have dared, and, if I had been a rich girl who lived in a big house, and didn't paint all day, he wouldn't have thought of speaking so; and I did so wish I were a man—except that I wouldn't for the world, no! not for the world, have been anything so despicable.'

"I laughed a little over this picture of the little seventeen-year-old artist sitting on the floor raging. Poor Pauline! There are per-

haps some disadvantages in having a genius for a father.

"Sir Charles surprised her in tears before she had had time to recover her composure. He had met his brother coming away from the house, and he guessed something of what had happened. His wrath was so much hotter than Pauline's that she felt as if hers were swallowed up in it.

" 'He said very little, but he got quite white with anger,' she said. 'I have never before or since seen anyone *so* angry. I told him that I would never look at his brother again, and then I was sorry I had divulged anything. Do you remember about the fisherman who fished up the genii in a glass bottle? I was like that fisherman when he had knocked the top of the bottle off, and the unsealed spirit towered up.'

"That was the beginning of the courtship, I suppose. It began in a storm, and yet the characteristic part of their love, when I knew Pauline and Sir Charles, was its peacefulness.

“ Pauline was so utterly sure of him ; certainly, after ten years, she well might be.

“ Sir Charles proposed to her father for her, and her father would not hear of an engagement. He said that Pauline was too young, that Sir Charles’ family wouldn’t approve, and that his daughter should never go where she would be condescended to ; that she was a born artist, and would be miserable if she tried to be anything else ; that he hated the notion, and wouldn’t even discuss it with his would-be son-in-law.

“ Indeed, my dear old professor seems to have been thoroughly unreasonable for once, and to have all but turned this unwelcome rich suitor out of his house. Pauline herself was only half-hearted. She liked Sir Charles *rather*, she allowed ; but then she loved her work ; if he wanted to take her away from that, why then, her father was right, and, unfortunately, that was what he did want.

“ Sir Charles was ready to give Pauline all *his* heart could desire, or his mind devise for her. He was prepared to take her home as

his wife in the teeth of all his relations, to insist on their behaving politely to her, but he didn't see what she could require beyond what it was in his power to give. He was ambitious himself, of course, but in a woman ambition seemed to him a trifle out of place, and he had strong ideas about the right place for everything.

"He was jealous of Pauline's paint-box, and piqued that she only 'half' liked him; but, on the other hand, he was tenacious and doggedly faithful. He was quite determined that he would win her in the end, and, in the meantime, he gained a step at a time very slowly, with a kind of impatient patience.

" 'He was always trying to do kind things for us,' Pauline said, 'and he was always irritated at seeing me working hard. He declared it utterly preposterous that I should get overtired, while he had plenty of money to spare. He used to scold me, if he found me pale, and, at first, I resented the scolding, and we quarrelled often, at least, I quarrelled, and he waited till I came round. I missed him if he

stayed away. The resentment became rather a pretence at last. Sometimes he used to persuade me to take a holiday and go away with him for a treat. He would fetch me after breakfast, quite early, and bring me home in the evening. We liked to take the train out of London, and walk in the country by the Thames. I got so fond of the Thames! It was a very simple kind of treat. I am sure his friends would have been greatly surprised if they had known, but then,' said Pauline softly, 'there is a bit of him that no one has ever known but me. I suppose, if he had been in love with a girl in his own set, he couldn't have done that, but I am sure that the very fact of my surroundings being different from his made me more sacred to him. I used to feel ashamed, even then, when I cared so little comparatively for him, because he had so much reverence for me. Once he said to me, that what the Sunday of the orthodox was meant to be to the six working days, I was to all the rest of his life. The saying almost frightened me.'

“She spoke of that phase as if it were quite a long time ago. ‘We are so near together, I am in *all* his life now,’ she said, and it flashed across me that I understood why she had once declared that ‘she wasn’t to be pitied.’ Well—I didn’t pity her now!

“It was odd, for Pauline’s was naturally a more passionate and emotional nature than Sir Charles’s; but, in this instance, he, who was so cautious, seems to have fallen suddenly in love, and she, whose charm lay in her quick sympathy, to have walked in very slowly, with occasional steps backwards.

“She told me how she and her father had spent a month at L——t nine years before. She had painted a great deal; she had been very excited and anxious over her picture.

“‘I can see my old self,’ she said, ‘going in and out, with my palette in my hand, and my hair in a plait down my back. I was plump then, and had a bright colour, and Sir Charles was quite young.

“‘He had insisted on following us to L——t, though I was not at all sure that I

was pleased at his coming; he interfered too much with my work.

“‘We walked together to the church on the hill. I was bent on finishing the picture of the merman. It is the best piece of work I ever did, but the best is bad! It does not express nearly all that I meant.

“‘I worked till the light faded, and I was cross and tired on the way home. I don't think that you are ever irritable, Susie, but then you don't know how one's nerves are strained by the effort to transfer what one sees and feels to canvas. Charles laughed at my depression. I think in those days it was difficult to make him see more than his own side of a question. He told me that if painting made me unhappy the remedy was simple. I had better throw my paint-brushes away, and marry him, and do nothing to weary myself any more.

“‘I answered him rather hotly. My talent, however inadequate and small, was yet part of me. I said, “To give it up would be like destroying a bit of my very soul. It would

be wrong—wrong as suicide.” He ought not to tempt me to suppress the best part of myself. But naturally, Charles could not take that view. He said, “You are a woman first and last, Pauline, but you haven’t yet found that out.”

“Pauline’s eyes smiled at the remembrance of that by-gone quarrel. ‘But we understand each other now,’ she said; and there was no need to tell me so; even I could see that. I have met many lovers since, and I have heard many love stories, but I have never known any two people who were so ‘close together,’ as Pauline said, as those two.

“‘Go on,’ I whispered. ‘You were not then the Pauline *I* know. Tell me more.’

“I felt as if I must hear it all now; and I fixed my eyes on the darkening outline of the hill that I saw through the open window, and I listened to her low voice, and saw what she described almost as vividly as one sees in a dream.

“‘We clambered over the rocks on the way home. My hands were laden with my

picture and my painting materials, but I hurried on in advance and would not let Sir Charles help me to carry the precious paints that were his rivals,' said Pauline. 'I felt as if there were a storm in my heart. Sir Charles' words had raised it. I did not notice how fast the real storm was gathering, though I had put the bank of clouds into my sketch.

"All at once there was a bright flash of forked lightning. It startled me, and I lost my footing. I screamed to Charles then, because it is natural to call to *him* in any difficulty; but he could not reach me in time to save me. I had been standing on the top of a high rock, and I fell backwards on to the jagged, black points below. My back was hurt. It has hurt me more or less ever since. In fact,' she added simply, 'it was hurt beyond any cure but *one*. I think that that one sure remedy will come to me very soon now—very soon indeed.'

"It is very cruel. Oh, Pauline, I think everything is very cruel,' I cried; and it wasn't only of her, and the sharp rocks and the never-

ceasing pain to her poor, pretty body that I was thinking.

“‘It was dreadful at first,’ said Pauline, shivering, ‘though I left off being so sorry for myself when I saw how *he* cared. I don’t think I had realised before how much I was to him. He isn’t demonstrative, you know, and it was rather his way to throw ridicule on any display of feeling; but he was miserable when I was in pain, and so bitter and angry with fate, and yet so gentle to me. At first I couldn’t help hoping, in spite of the doctors; then my hope died—of starvation; and then I tried to pull my courage together and to send Charles away. I thought it would be better for him to forget me; I believed he would in time. Other men forget, don’t they? He might marry someone else, I thought, and have a home and children, and the love he deserved and needed, for he had had remarkably little from his mother. But it cost me something to make up my mind to that. If I hadn’t loved him as I ought before, I think that pain of parting perhaps counted a little to my side.

I had learned to lean on him, and it hurt me now to dispute with him. It was a terrible year.'

"She shuddered again at the recollection, but I shook my head. Pauline was beyond my understanding. If I had been in her place I could have died for the man I was in love with, but I couldn't have refused to see him.

"She held out for a whole twelvemonth, though he came to the door constantly. I think they were almost equally strong-willed, but he had one advantage—her heart played traitor, though her reason was against him.

"'Sometimes I thought he would have been kinder if he had left me alone and given me up,' said Pauline. 'But he wouldn't. He came again and again, and at last I said I would see him once more—and say good-bye. I had changed a good deal since he had seen me, and that year had made me years older. It had taught me so much, and it had deepened everything. If I could paint again, I could paint better pictures now. Susie, it was dreadfully silly, but I hated to think that,

when he came into the room, I should see in his eyes that I wasn't any longer pretty. You see he was the first person who taught me that I *was*. I believe that silly little bit of vanity had really strengthened my resolution. But, when I actually did see him, I forgot it. It all shrivelled away, as my childish anger had shrivelled away before his once before. I tried to tell him that I only let him come in because I couldn't bear to go on turning him away from the door, and because, since he refused to listen to what my father told him, or what the doctor told him, he must understand when I told him that I couldn't possibly get quite well ; that I was sure I should never sit up right again, and that he must give me up. He answered me out of my own mouth. He said, "If I cut you out of my life, I shall kill the best part of me. Who said that to do that was wrong—wrong as suicide? Do you think you are less to me than your work was to you?" I tried to argue the point, Susie, but he wouldn't argue. He stood straight upright by my side, and would not touch or kiss

me, but spoke quite quietly, with the fixed look on his face that he has when he has set his heart on something. He said that he had given me all the love he had, and that I had no right to throw it aside and to tell him it was useless now. He said that no other woman should ever be his wife, but that he would go and find what consolation he could, if I liked. A man must feed on husks if he can't get bread. He said he knew that I loved him, and that I couldn't deny it, but that I hadn't the courage of my love. It ought to be great enough to live, whether we were man and wife or no. He said, "I thought *you* believed in a next world, and in our souls' immortality. For my part, I have rather considered that a pretty fallacy, but if you send me away, and bid me be happy and comfortable with another woman, because I can never have the satisfaction of making you my wife, where is *your* faith gone? I'll go—now—this moment, if you choose it, and I'll believe in your beliefs no more." And when he said that,' cried Pauline, 'my love seemed to rise up as if some-

one had tried to choke it with the dust of a grave—and it wouldn't be buried. I think half the world would say that I was wrong—but I clung to him then; I couldn't help it! I told him I belonged to him for ever and ever, and, God knows, so I do, only more now, ten times more, than I did ten years ago!

"I remember Pauline saying that word for word. I remember the thrill in her low voice, and the sensation of awe that grew on me. I do not think that her love has turned to dust and ashes with her body. And perhaps she was right. In nine cases out of ten she would have been wrong, but he was the tenth.

"It was an odd story. Now that I am old, I think it stranger than I did then, for at eighteen one believes so easily in the indestructibility of love.

"Sir Charles won his point once and for ever. They had no more quarrels. I sometimes fancy that if Pauline had remained well and strong the two decided natures might have had hard struggles for the mastery. I

am not sure that so original and accentuated a character as Pauline's would have suited him, but her weakness appealed to his softer side and to his most generous qualities.

“‘He has been good, oh, so good, to me,’ she said. ‘People say that he is hard. They don’t know. If God reads our hearts when we stand before Him, He will find in mine what Charles really is. But I could never express it, because the tenderness of such a man is deeper than any woman’s words.’

“Sir Charles came to see her constantly after that final victory, and he wrote to her when he couldn’t meet her.

“Pauline was pathetically anxious that his career should not suffer; that they should be justified in holding to each other, and he seems to have understood that the best chance of happiness for her eager soul lay in letting her have a share in all his interests. She read his speeches, and glowed over his triumphs, and threw herself heart and soul into his work. She became more and more his confidante, and even his counsellor.

It was odd to think of such a romance in such a man's life. No one except the professor knew of it. Sir Charles was not expansive, and the impossibility of marriage made him shy of letting anyone into the secret; besides, he was like Charlie, and shrank almost morbidly from exposing his deeper feelings.

"If he was determined to stick to her at any cost, she was equally determined that their love should remain at its best, and not degenerate into mere pitying tenderness on his part, or self-indulgence on hers. She would never let any complaints pass her lips; she tried, she said, to be both a better and a wiser woman for his sake.

"‘I do truly believe that, if he had married and settled down comfortably, he would have done less,’ she said. ‘I hope so! for I have striven very hard to be a help and not a hindrance to him. I have read and worked and thought and tried to be brave—for his sake. I do not think that in all these nine years I have stopped trying, though I have failed often, and I am very tired now. I

should have told you this before, only I thought, until yesterday, that you had guessed. Now I want you to understand it, so far as anyone can, because I am sure that we are getting near the last chapter, and—oh, Susie, I don't like leaving him, and I want someone to talk to who isn't quite heartbroken. He and father care too much.'

"My dear, she took my hand and held it tight when she said that, and the clasp of her small fingers, that were almost as slight as Charlie's, touched me.

"I think Pauline had some magnetism about her, for all at once I felt a rush of tenderness for her. Poor little thing! lying there, facing the terror of death alone, because the two men who shared her heart 'cared too much' to support her.

"This appeal moved me the more because I had always respected Pauline's courage so greatly. We kissed each other for the first time, and she cried with the quick transition from gravity to gaiety that was characteristic of her.

“Do you know, you are the only *girl* I have ever really liked. Men are so *much* nicer than women. Women fuss me generally. I am glad I’ve met you, Susie.’

“And then the maid came in with the lights, and pulled down the blinds, shutting out the night sky, and the hill that was dim now like a shadow, and the tree that was tossing its arms outside in the wind that blew from the sea.

“I looked at Sir Charles with new eyes after that, and many things became clear to me; but the holiday feeling I had had at first was gone, and it never came back.

“Perhaps it was the Irish blood in me that made me superstitious, but I became possessed with a presentiment, and felt constantly as if something were just about to happen. Charlie was wonderfully the better for the change, and Pauline declared the next day that she was better too. She talked no more about dying, but was quite merry again.

“Sir Charles stayed a whole week, which was a long holiday for him, and then he went

back to London, and it was arranged that the children and I should stay another fortnight, and that then Kate should take them home, and I should go to Holyhead, whence I must cross to Ireland.

“I had heard from the mother at the convent, and I was eager at last to start. Last days are so terrible! I tried to fancy that I was homesick for my native land. I was sick with longing to be my old self again, but it wasn't Ireland that would make me that.

“Molly cried as if her heart would break when the parting came and she said good-bye to me. She was very tender-hearted, and the dearest of little girls, but I knew she would be comforted by the new picture-book she would open in the train. Charlie was cross, as he always was if he was moved. He said saying good-bye was ‘rot,’ and he got into the carriage as soon as possible, turning his back on me and staring obstinately out of the farthest window. Only at the very last moment he put his head out of the door, and cried, ‘Now just you remember, Sooly, so

soon as ever I am grown up, I shall come back and—' but I lost the last of the sentence in a puff of smoke that came between him and me, and made my eyes water; and the guard banged the door and they were off.

"Dear Charlie! he never has forgotten me, and his affection has been among the many blessings of my life; but the *child* I had mothered was carried away for ever by that train. Charlie was well in his teens before I saw him again, and immensely improved, his guardian said, by a public school.

"Pauline had made me promise that I would come straight back and have tea with her after I had seen the children off.

"I think she guessed that I should be sad by myself; and indeed I have never liked solitude, and there has seldom been a time in my life when people's kindness hasn't had power to cheer me. Charlie was different; even as a little boy he always preferred to be alone, if he was unhappy, and I think English people generally are like that.

"Pauline and the professor were both very

kind, and I stayed with them till bed-time, and then Pauline persuaded me to bring my things into the dressing-room next hers and sleep there. She said I should be lonely in the empty wing of the house now that my two charges were gone; so I yielded partly because it was less trouble to yield, and I was morally tired just then, and partly because I was horribly afraid of burglars if I was left on a floor by myself. I stayed up talking to Pauline till late; she was always such good company! and I couldn't sleep, even when I got into bed.

"My brain insisted on grinding out thoughts, though I grew very tired of them. I kept going over and over again all that had happened since I had left Ireland. I kept putting things together and remaking my idea of Charlie's guardian by the light of all I knew now. I found myself wishing that I could give him his heart's desire; but Pauline was dying, and the saints work few miracles now!

"There was a peasant girl called Bridget,

who lived in the village near the great Ballymohr Convent, hundreds of years ago, and her mother was taken with leprosy, which was common in Ireland then, and Bridget prayed and fasted night and day for six days in the wood (where the Holy Well was), and Saint Bridget appeared to her in a bright light and asked her why she wearied Heaven with her beseechings, seeing that there was but one doctor who could cure her mother, and that he was Dr. Death. But Bridget said that Love was stronger than Death, as the Son of Mary had proved. And Saint Bridget bade her try conclusions with the doctor who stood like a skeleton on her left hand. Bridget wrestled with him, and he broke her ribs, but the mother of God stood by her and saved her alive; and then Death vanished, and Bridget found herself on the ground and barely able to crawl home; but her mother was whole from that day.

“Well, Bridget haunted me that night. Perhaps it was because the nuns had told me about her when I was a child, and I was

going back to the scene of my childhood. It is a very old legend, and I loved it. But the nuns never gave poor Bridget a high place among the miracle-workers, because her affection was 'earthly' they said. Then I fancied I heard Pauline call someone, and I jumped out of bed, and ran to the door and listened; but there was no sound, so I went back to bed, for she hated to be 'fussed' over.

"I was glad I didn't hate Pauline, because for one dreadful minute I had felt as if I did (which has always made me ashamed to think of). If I could have wrestled with a skeleton for her health, it would have restored my self-respect, and I think I would have done it, though I am not very brave. I did pray to *my* patron saint, who is not Saint Bridget, for her and for him, and then at last I fell asleep, and then—something happened.

"You always laugh at me for believing so much, but I know this was no dream. I distinctly felt Pauline open the door between us, and come and stand by my bedside, and look

at me with the half-wistful, half-merry expression that I knew quite well.

"It was still dark, so I wouldn't have thought I could see anyone, and she was helpless from the waist downwards, and could not move a step; but yet she was there. She stooped a little and made as though she would have liked to touch me, and then drew back. The gesture was like Pauline, who was shy of offering caresses. I started up then, but she was gone!

"I got up, shivering all over, though I wasn't frightened, only greatly excited. I struck a light and took it into Pauline's room. She lay on her back with her eyes shut, and her lips parted quite naturally—but there was no breath between them.

"Her hands were still supple and warm; almost as I entered the room, her spirit must have gone.

"I put the candle down, and knelt by her bed with my heart beating very fast. She was 'cured' at last. She had turned that sharpest corner. The peace in her face forbade pity.

I could not cry. Pauline carried with her still the treasure that had been hers for ten long years. I could not doubt it then—I do not doubt it now. I heard an old man's footsteps in the passage.

“‘Are you asleep, my dear,’ said a voice outside.

“Pauline had once told me that the professor seldom went to rest before the small hours, and that he would often steal to her door in the course of the night to make sure that she was well, and wanting nothing.

“I rose, with my knees trembling, and then the tears blinded my eyes. The old man's steps died away again; he was going back to his writing, satisfied that she was resting well.

“After all these years I do not like to talk of the day that followed. The quiet, tearless grief of old age is so terribly pathetic, and, alas! so terribly lonely.

“I do not think that my dear old professor had had the faintest idea that the end was so

near. The shock was great, and the blow very heavy. I could not leave him alone, and yet I felt helpless. At last I put on my hat, and walked on to the village, and telegraphed to Sir Charles. I thought, while I did so, of the last occasion on which he had come in answer to my telegram. I was ashamed to consider myself at such a time, but I could not help being sorry that bad news should again reach him by my hand. It was a silly thought, for, of course, it did not matter who sent the sorrowful message, but one cannot help being silly sometimes. I wrote :

“ ‘ Pauline has been very ill. Come at once.’ ”

“ And he came before I thought his arrival possible. I was sitting on the stairs outside the door of Pauline’s room (the professor was inside, and I did not like to intrude on him, and yet could not bear to be far away), when, looking through the stair-case window, I saw Sir Charles open the garden gate. I went to meet him, fearing to tell him the truth. He just glanced at me, and his face was white and drawn. Then he said :

"‘I see that I am too late. Take me to her, please.’ And we went silently into the house. I took him upstairs, and then hesitated.

"‘Her father is in there,’ I said. And he answered :

"‘*I* am more to her than her father.’ And he put me aside and went in, and I sat outside again and sobbed.

"I had had a certain affection for Pauline, but I knew very well that my grief had no place beside the grief of her lover and her father, for it was for *them* not for her that my heart was aching.

"I had packed my box, and I knew that I must leave that evening. It would not have been right to leave the old man alone, but, now that Sir Charles had come, everything was in safe hands. When I heard someone walk across the room and touch the door handle, I got up and ran downstairs, lest I should be found in the way.

"I had missed the early train, and the next did not go till eight o’clock. I put on my hat

and cloak and walked up the white road, and away over the downs, which were covered with clinging mists. I could see only a few steps before me, but there was a narrow path which I meant to keep to. I wasn't afraid of damp, for I hardly ever caught cold, and in Ballymohr I had often got drenched without taking hurt. I had wanted to follow that path before, but it was too long a walk for Charlie; now I hardly thought where I was going, except that I was careful to keep away from the village, because my eyes were so red, and my face was pale.

"I got so tired that I had to sit down presently, though the grass was wet, and then when I went on the mist turned to rain, and my clothes felt heavy and I lost the track. But I did not care much, though generally I dislike walking alone. Somehow I felt as if I had no more power of 'minding' anything that happened to myself alone. When one is very sorry for someone else, everything loses proportion, and the small things in one's life get quite dream-like and unreal, and don't

seem to matter in the least, though that never lasts long, at least not with me, who am naturally matter-of-fact and fond of small things.

“I kept thinking, while I walked, of details that Pauline had told me. I fancied her wandering with Sir Charles over these very downs, in the days when she was quite well, and devoted to her painting. I could imagine the dress she wore, and the way she walked, and the expression of her face (I daresay that I imagined quite wrong, for she was not in love with him at seventeen, as she was at twenty-seven), and I tried to see him without the hard lines that work and anxiety and, perhaps, self-repression had drawn. I pictured them so vividly that I said to myself that, if I were to see them with my bodily eyes, I should hardly be surprised; and then I came all at once on the little grey church—Pauline’s church.

“The path I was following had led me there, and I opened the gate and went and sat in the porch, and felt more than ever as if I were in a dream.

"I could see the sea from where I sat; and the seat I sat on was hewn out of granite, and was to the touch like the rocks on the shore. I pressed my hands against it, and leaned my head back on the wall, and watched the gulls fly low over the sailors' graves. I felt as if I had been in that place before, and as if it were all quite familiar, even to the crack in the granite, and an odd dent under my feet.

"Presently I heard voices—an old cracked voice, and another clear and firm, that I should recognise anywhere, and I knew what they were talking about, even though the words did not reach me distinctly.

"If Pauline had married, she would have been married in that grey church, and it was in that church-yard by the sea, where all the winds of Heaven blow freely, and from where you can see the ships go up and down, that they would bury her.

"I heard Sir Charles say:

"'No. Not in the shadow. It must be where the sun can reach it—not under the shadow of the building.'

"I heard the grave-digger explain to him that, on the sunny side where the church did not shelter them, the headstones always got blown crooked.

"Then they both walked to the right side of the church-yard, where the sun strikes, and where the boundary wall is low and nearly broken down, so that the yellow sea-cabbage has scrambled in and has decorated the graves with gold.

"I suppose Sir Charles got his own way, for the old man went off grumbling and left him alone, standing with bowed head among the stones.

"I did not want to spy on him, so I went into the church, where I couldn't see him. Someone had been scrubbing the floor, and had forgotten to lock up. Perhaps the scrubber had seen the rain coming, and gone home in a hurry.

"It was a curious old church; the roof was like a boat turned upside down, with beams running across and across. It smelt musty, and was badly kept. I think your Protestant

churches are sad and stern, and I do not love them as I love my own. Yet *any* place of worship is dear to me, for the sake of the thousands of prayers that have saturated and stained its walls.

"Pauline had told me once that she, on the contrary, disliked forms of words, and had no predilection for the *inside* of churches. She felt stifled by priests and people; the service 'seemed to come between her soul and God,' she said. The music in its appeal to her senses distracted her, and filled her with distrust. Pauline and Sir Charles were alike in that respect, but *I* am different. To me it seems sad that people are different. I should like everyone to agree about everything.

"It comforted me to pray for her, but all the time that I was saying the prayer for the departed souls I was thinking of Sir Charles out in the cold. I wondered whether he would go back to London immediately after the funeral and take up his work again, and appear just the same as usual. I wondered whether his mother would guess anything of

what had happened, or would care, if she did guess, and I remembered that he had been in love with Pauline for ten years, and that Lady Bargreave had not discovered it. And I came to the conclusion that, in spite of her quick wit, she would never know, just because she would never care.

"Sir Charles had kept his two lives quite apart. It was sad that it should have been so, for loneliness is not good for anyone. I wished that Pauline were in the world again—for his sake.

"The clouds cleared presently, and the sun shone through the thick, greenish glass, and made yellow patches on the floor. I looked at my watch, and found it was nearly six, and high time that I hurried home. Sir Charles must have gone long ago.

"I went out at the west door, because I had a fancy to see the exact place from which Pauline drew the window, with the merman peering in. There was a wonderful freshness and purity in the air after the rain, everything smelt so sweet when I stepped out; it was as

if a blessing were falling on the wide-stretching land, and on the light-touched sea.

"I stood still to share in the benediction. There are moments when the peace of Heaven seems to rest on everything, save the men and women who so sorely need it, when one feels inclined to cry with Esau, 'Bless me, even me also, oh, my father!'

"While I stood there a sharp pain came over me.

"I do not understand, and I cannot explain this, but I *know* (and I suppose that other women have experienced the same sensation) that it is possible for the bitter grief of another to invade one's own soul.

"One gives sympathy voluntarily, but this sensation is like an involuntary shock, that makes one shrink and tremble, though the anguish is purely spiritual. I looked round quickly, and saw a man kneeling by the low stone wall, with his arms resting on the top of it, and his head buried in them. A great terror came into my heart when I recognised Sir Charles.

"I stood, not daring to go nearer to him, and not able to go away and leave him in such distress. I had seen men weep. I had once seen Uncle Dennis in a passion of despair, when his wife lay dead; but *that* was natural and different. He was not Sir Charles. Then I reflected that, whatever happened, he must never know that anyone had seen his trouble. I tried to slip by him noiselessly, and, as I did so, I heard him say something under his breath, in a low, broken voice that was not like his at all. He lifted his head suddenly, and, for a second, I was afraid least he had heard my footstep. But it wasn't me he was thinking of, and I need not have feared. The look of longing on his face was more than I could bear to see. I turned and ran along the path and down the hill.

"When I got back to the house, the professor came into the sitting-room to bid me good-bye. He was older and feebler than before, but as kind as ever, nay, even kinder. He bid me be sure to write to tell him how I

had fared on my journey, and he talked to me about Pauline quite composedly, and as if she were not so very far away.

“‘It is hard on *him*,’ said the professor; ‘but for me— Well! a little more patience and the door will be unlocked.’

“Then he told me that I was the only girl friend that Pauline had ever made, and that he should like, some day, to send me something in remembrance of her. He kept his promise, and sent me the picture of ‘Youth’ that hangs in my room.

“‘You are so pale and sad,’ he said. ‘Ireland will think we treat her daughters badly. But one day you will forget the sadness of this time, dear Miss Susie, or at least it won’t oppress you so much. Then you must remember that you were a comfort and a pleasure to my darling, as you will be to many other people before the time comes for you, too, to go the way we all go, and to find the clue to the puzzle.’

“He put his wrinkled hand on my head, as if I were a little girl.

“‘I am such an old man,’ he said, ‘such an old man now that I may say, God bless you, Susie. I am sure,’ he added, with his odd, quick smile, ‘that whether *I* say it or not, He does, and always will.’

“The words comforted me, and I wanted to say so; but I could not find my voice, so I never have thanked him and never shall, I fear. All through one’s life people give one so much that one can never repay.

“Sir Charles came in before I left, and insisted on going with me to the station. He was so exactly like himself that I almost thought I must have dreamed about the scene on the hill.

“He talked about my passage, and the weather, and the chances of a rough crossing. He told me where I had better go if the boat were delayed, and he gave me the address of lodgings that he knew of, neatly written in his firm, upright hand, and saw that I put it in my purse. He was an intensely practical person, and never forgot anything.

“We walked up and down in the clean

.


white-washed station, and each time that we got to the end of the platform I looked out and thought, 'In so many more minutes it will be over; *this* bit of my life will be done, and that sea and that dark hill, and Sir Charles, will all be of the past,' and the ticking of the clock hurt me like little stabs.

" 'I shall go back to London on Saturday,' said Sir Charles. 'Have you any message for my mother? One day you must come and stay with us again.'

"I shook my head; somehow I did not think it likely that I should do that; but I murmured thanks with an odd recollection of his first invitation to me. What ages ago that seemed!

" 'No—it is I who should thank you,' said Sir Charles. He looked away over the darkening country, and then back at me. 'For you were good to her,' he said.

"We took another turn up and down. The clock ticked louder, I fancied, but *I* could say nothing. I longed to express my sym-



pathy, but it fell to the ground, scorched before his grief.

“‘My mother has never known about her,’ said Sir Charles, after a pause. ‘There is no reason why she should. When we meet in London you will have forgotten about this?’ and I nodded. ‘Thanks,’ he said, straightening himself with the gesture that always reminded me of his godson. ‘Ah, your train is signalled.’

“I stretched out my hands to bid him good-bye, with the perception that I should never in my life again see *this* Sir Charles, this man who had been Pauline’s lover for ten years, of whose ‘Holy of Holies’ I, by chance, had caught a glimpse of; my pity was so strong that it broke through my self-consciousness.

“‘May I, just for this once, say I am sorry?’ I cried incoherently. ‘I promise I won’t talk of this when I see you again; and I am going away, you know. You have been very good to Charlie and Molly and me. You will let me be sorry—too?’

"He turned round, as if something had startled him.

"*'You are* sorry, Susie!' he said. '*Don't—* You'll never get through life if you take other people's griefs like this. One has enough to do with fighting one's own, though I hope that you will not know— Here comes the train!'

"It came up with a shriek, looking like a great devouring monster, for it was dark enough to see the red sparks on the line.

"*'I believe you are as much afraid of it as Molly is!'* said Sir Charles with a laugh, when I shrank back.

"He put me into a carriage, and tucked me into his fur wrap, in spite of my protestations that the rug didn't belong to me.

"*'It belongs to you now. Don't be too proud, Miss Susie! I thought we were friends,'* he said. He turned away, and I fancied he was going, but he came back and leaned in at the window.

"*'If I tell you something, will you believe me?'* he asked.

“‘Yes—anything,’ I said.

“‘That’s rather rash of you,’ he remarked, with the little satirical curve of his lip that I knew of old. ‘But, all the same, I am speaking the truth, Susie. Pauline has given me the greatest pain, and the best joy that I shall ever know. I can’t say which weighs down the scale. The pain, I suppose; but, if I had to choose again, I would choose *her* still. I am telling you this because you are “so sorry.” You see, since I would do it again, I’ve really no just cause for complaint, eh?’

“His face flushed, and his grey eyes shone with a pride in her which I have never seen surpassed.

“‘No one must ever pity the man *she* loves,’ he said steadily.

“I wished that Pauline could have heard that, for no praise and no lament could have meant so much.

“‘I will try hard—not to be sorry for you, Sir Charles,’ I said; and I was very thankful he had not discovered that I had seen him in the churchyard.

“‘Thank you,’ he answered again, and then hesitated a moment. ‘My creed has fewer items than yours, as you are probably aware,’ he said; ‘but it is preposterous to suppose that she is non-existent. I *don’t* suppose it. Well, good-bye, or is it *au revoir*, Miss Susie?’

“‘Good-bye,’ I said. And that, indeed, was good-bye.

“What happened to me in Ireland had nothing to do with the chapter of my life that ended then. Yet the things that cut deepest into one’s consciousness never quite die, and, if I had never read that chapter, I should, I think, have been a different person. Whether better or worse, God knows, but certainly different, as one who has seen a vision is different ever after from those who have not.

“There was a terrible scandal about Sir Charles’ brother just before Lady Bargreave’s death. Mr. Bargreave escaped, and got safely off to America. Sir Charles took the whole affair ‘very philosophically,’ people said. He sits, as everyone knows, on the bench now.

It is curious to think that his brother, if he had been caught, would have stood in the dock."

That was the end of Susie's reminiscences about the Bargreaves. The part about Sir Charles rather surprised me, because I once met that very clever gentleman at a reception at Durham Castle, and I should have said that he was quite the last person to become involved in a quixotic and "impossible" attachment.

Susie is rather given to crediting her friends with more nobility than they possess.

"Sir Charles does not look as if he had ever had an unlucky love affair," I said.

Susie's sweet face flushed.

"To love anyone well is never that," she said.

"That is only a woman's theory," I said.

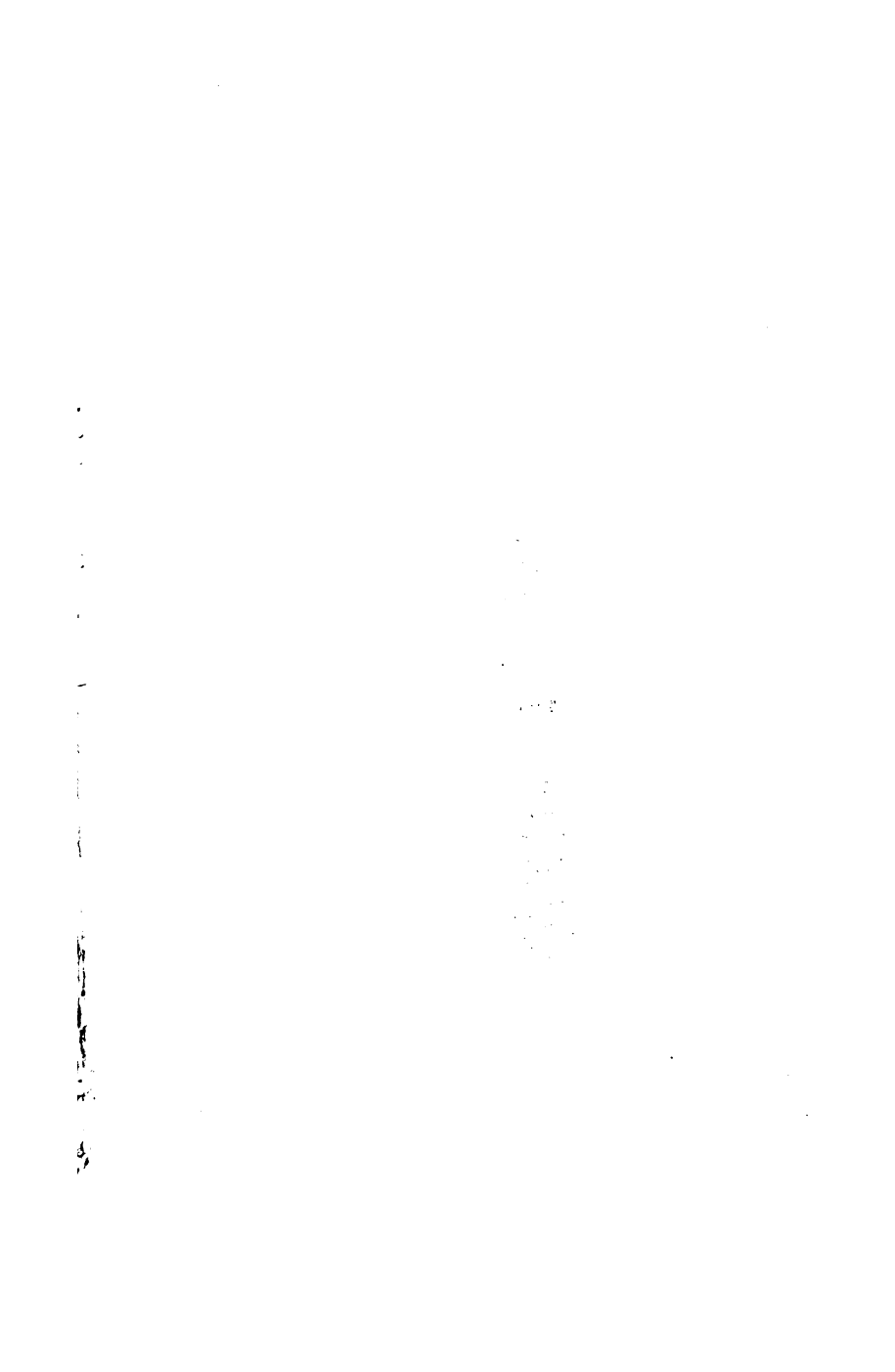
"And women are the 'only' mothers of men, mavourneen," laughed Susie. "Their theories are, consequently, apt to live. Besides, it was *not* a woman, it was the most

masculine man I've met, who taught me that."

"It is very strange," I murmured, unconvinced.

"Well, yes; it's just the most wonderful thing in all the world," said Susie.

THE END.



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